BUSINESS / B1 **ACROSS** / A14 **WORLD** / A20 **NEWS** / A4 **METRO** / A17

Peso seen firming up to 43:$1 by yearend

Man stopped from stabbing Gov. Panlilio

US still world's top arms supplier

SWS: Record 3.8-M families went hungry in last quarter

50 employees of Muntinlupa university laid off since June without any reason

Traders say NBN probe is No. 1 'teleserye'

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lasconi

UNLESS IT ACTUAL... is pins down Malacañang and President Macapagal-Arroyo, the televised Senate probe of ZTE...

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, October 2, 2007 ★★ Vol. 22 / No. 294 www.inquirer.net

Asean turns screws on Burma junta

BANGKOK...SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS on Monday tacked the screws on the military junta in Burma (Myanmar), saying they were revoking for the ruthless suppression of a pro-democracy uprising.

For its part, Japan said it was considering new measures against Burma. New Zealand, however, said it was the United Nations that must decide whether to tighten economic sanctions on the secretive regime.

A UN special envoy, who was sent to Burma to express outrage over the crackdown and persuade the junta to accept the people's demands for democracy, has been forced to wait until Tuesday to meet Burma's top military leader, Than Shwe.

With protests quashed, news stifled

ASIAN TURNS 2

Resignation stops House impeachment case

By Christian V. Esguerra, Dona Pazo Bogaer and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THE RESIGNATION HAS BECKONED the impeachment case against Sen. Jinggoy Estrada from the House to the Senate.

Not only does resigned Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos face criminal charges, the controversial inquiry into the $329-million contract for the National Broadband Network (NBN) project, which he is accused of brokering, will also continue.

Lawmakers yesterday welcomed the unexpected resignation of Abalos, saying they will ignore the Comelec from another controversy.

"His act of sparing the institution that he serves from further harm has to be commended," Sen. Rodolfo Aquino III said.

But other lawmakers said the resignation was meant to protect President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The impeachment complaint filed by Iloilo Rep. Gen. Rolex Suplico will be archived as soon as the House receives a copy of Abalos' resignation letter, according to House Majority Leader Arthur Defensor.

"It's now more and academic," Defensor said of the impeachment complaint.

Suplico said he would confer with his lawyers on the possibility of filing

RESIGNATION / A2

$329-M deal zaps Abalos

NBN row claims its first casualty

By Beverly T. Nicholas

THE $329-MILLION broadband scandal that has hounded President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration for weeks claimed its first casualty—or sacrificial lamb as some critics put it—when Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos resigned yesterday.

"I have come to the painful determination that the time has come to separate my person from the office I have occupy," said Abalos, 72, who has been accused of offering bribes while brokering the allegedly overpriced National Broadband Network (NBN) project with China's ZTE Corp.

"I am resigning the chairmanship of the Comelec effective immediately," Abalos said in statement from a nosy crowd gathered at his residence in Mandaluyong that gave the press conference the trappings of a victory party instead of a

EDITORIAL / A12

HIGH DRAMA. Benjamin Abalos is comforted by his wife Cora, as Mayor Benhur Abalos and other family members shortly after he announced his resignation as chair of the Commission on Elections at Monday's press conference in his home in Mandaluyong City

ABALOS / A2

Gov't tells high court ZTE offered the best deal

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE GOVERNMENT DEFENDED IN the Supreme Court its decision to award to China's ZTE Corp. the $329-million contract for the National Broadband Network (NBN) project, saying the firm had offered the best deal.

The Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), which represents the government, decried the "hasty motion" that it said shortened the truth about the agreement.

The OSG, impleaded in the petitions to stop the NBN deal with the Chinese firm, also said in its comment that the agreement was shortsheeted, did not need to undergo a public bidding because it was to be implemented via an executive agreement, and offered savings for the government.

GOV'T TELLS A-3

'Thank God, Mr. Abalos responded to our prayer'

By Jerome Aning and Nikko Dizon

THE COUNTRY'S ROMAN Catholic bishops yesterday thanked God that Commissioner on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos had departed from their midst.

A staunch election lawyer, Leila de Lima, who had tangled many times with Comelec officials over allegations of poll fraud, described Abalos as a politico "prone to pressure" and said the poll body under his watch "became the worst Comelec ever."

"Thank God Mr. Abalos responded to our prayers," the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines said in a statement. "The best decision that Mr. Abalos has done is to resign amid threats of impeachment ... Thank you, Mr. Abalos, for your decision."

CBCP president and Antipolo archbishop Angel Lagdameo said Abalos' resignation answered similar sentiments by high officials in other countries like Japan, who "do not wait for any conviction to be pronounced (but) simply volunteer to resign."

Ungsuwen Jingjapan Archbishop Orani V. Cruz said that Abalos' example "should be followed by public officials" embroiled in shabby controversies and whose integrity and credibility "have been much tarnished."

The bribery scandal surrounding the National Broadband Network (NBN) deal that engulfed Abalos to quit was the latest of a string of scandals to hit the Gloria regime last month.

Before the NBN scandal there were the P1.3-billion election computerization deal rebid annulled by the Supreme Court, the videotaping scandal that seemed to link to President Macapagal-Arroyo's cousin, the railroaded gambling in national and local polls—all of which had undermined the Comelec's credibility.

Journalists covering the Comelec beat would remember Abalos for his surveillability, even while he was playing golf.

In interviews, Abalos was often passionate when defending his and the Comelec's positions that

THANK GOD A-2

A chance to reform Comelec

By Nikko Dizon and Norman Bordadora

THEY HEAVED A SIGH OF RELIEF that he is gone, saying now is an good a time as any to restore the credibility of the Commission on Elections.

In separate interviews with the business, a big business group, a top poll watchdog and other election stakeholders yesterday said the departure of Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. should clear the way for electoral reforms.

"By February, there will be two vacant seats in the Comelec," said Alberto R. Lim, executive director of the Makati Business Club. "So, the best appointments would be done in

A CHANCE A-11

GMA flies to Shanghai to meet with China president, other execs

By Michael Lim Ubac

SHANGHAI (VIA FLIT)—Would it be business as usual this time around?

With continued trade and political engagements in mind, President Macapagal-Arroyo is set to arrive here today to meet with top businessmen and high-level government officials in various level during the National Broadband Network (NBN) furor.

The first order of business for Ms Arroyo following her arrival at 9 a.m. at the Shanghai International Airport will be a meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao at the Xi Jiao Guest House at 11:30 a.m.

At presstime, the talking points in the 50-minute meeting were still unavailable, but Consul General to Shanghai Maria Rosario Manalo-Sanchez said she did not think the two leaders would talk about the NBN deal awarded to ZTE Corp. of China.

Sanchez told reporters that Ms Arroyo's visit was focused on the "political, economic and social development" of both countries.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila

GMA FLIES A-10

CHANGING OF THE GUARD AT PNP. President Macapagal-Arroyo witnesses Monday's turnover of command of the Philippine National Police from Oscar Calderon (left) to Avelino Razon at Villa Isidi in Camp Crame in Quezon City. (See story on Page A1 &)

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

'10 telco insiders helped Isafp'

Doble says Globe, Smart execs may not have known of wiretaps

By Dona Pazo Bogon

EX-MILITARY AGENT VIDAL DOBLE TOLD A Senate inquiry yesterday his former unit, the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp), was assisted by 10 insiders of telecommunications service providers when it wiretapped President Macapagal-Arroyo and other political figures in the "Hello Garci" scandal.

Doble testified that his former superiors, Col. Red Bustaylo and Captains Frederick Bulong and Lindsay Ben Suggs, had recruited 10 "assets" from Globe Telecoms and Smart Communications.

The big telecom firms earlier denied they had a hand in the illegal wiretapping of the Press duty, saying that they did not have the capacity to do so.

It was the fourth public hearing into the "Hello Garci" controversy, which arose from wiretapped mobile phone conversations between President Arroyo and ex-Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano suggesting that they rigged the 2004 presidential election.

"Coordination was needed," Doble said in Filipino, adding that the Isafp recruited the telecom assets after "figuring out their vulnerabilities."

However, he did not name the alleged insiders, who he said were paid P20,000 monthly and given permits to carry firearms.

Doble said the officials of the two telecom companies may not have known about the wiretapping activities.

Meanwhile, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the defense committee hearing the wiretapping controversy, said he would call for a caucus to decide whether it was time to issue a subpoena to two Belgian officials and two military officers who had snubbed the hearings.

Biazon said the 15-member committee would vote whether to hold the officials in contempt and order their arrest.

Committee Secretary Eduardo Ermita had invoked "executive privilege" on behalf of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, former Isafp chief retired Brig. Gen. Felimon Santos and former Armed Forces chief of staff Efren Abu, among others.

Meanwhile, Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, chair of the committee on justice, human rights and good government, said he would call for a caucus to decide whether to cite Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., the presidential adviser on national security, in contempt for refusing to appear in the Senate inquiry into the wiretapping controversy.

Esperon said the subject matter of the inquiry "covers alleged conversations of the President illegally acquired which, if disclosed, would prejudice public interest in maintaining the confidentiality of conversations of the President in the exercise of her executive and policy decision-making process."

The inquiry also covers military affairs, he added.

Concerning presidential assistant Heherson Alcantara, who was summoned to explain his role in getting Doble to return to military headquarters at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal in 2005, Ermita insisted the will not appear unless the Senate states her wrongdoing or shows the relevance of her testimony.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno agreed that the Senate must be able to justify its summons of Palace officials.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada also stressed that subpoenas be sent to Bishops Teodoro Bacani and Deogracias Iñiguez who had also refused their repeated invitations.

Sen. Juhai Antoyo supported the subpoenas for the bishops, but objected to a subpoena for Doble, who he said had worked as a protocol officer in Mindanao when he (Antoyo) was executive secretary for then President Corazon Aquino.

"What wrong has she done? She has done nothing wrong. What kind of a hearing is this? Is this a kangaroo court," Antoyo said. With Cet Godinez-Bagayas Jr. and Norman Bordadora

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **NERI STOPS** controversial CHEd call center project /A7
- **RECORD 3.8-M** families went hungry in last 3 mos – SWS /A4

GMA receives China envoy

PRESIDENT ARROYO, Antoyo yesterday received the new ambassador from the People's Republic of China.

Ambassador Song Tao presented his credentials to the President on the eve of Ms Arroyo's visit to China to meet with Chinese President Hu Jintao and attend the opening of the Special Olympics in Shanghai.

The President had a closed-door meeting with Song, who was given foyer honors by the Presidential Security Group on his arrival at the Palace. Norman Bordadora

Ping: What makes an executive session?

By Dil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A SENATOR YESTERDAY QUESTIONED the presence of Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. at an executive session of senators last week when former National Economic and Development Authority Director General Romulo Neri was supposedly prevented from talking about his conversations with President Macapagal-Arroyo on the $329 million ZTE contract.

Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson said the presence of Andaya in the closed-door session on Wednesday rendered the executive session moot because only Neri and his lawyer were supposed to be present in the Senate Banga Caucus Room (he senators, stenographer, sergeant-at-arms and some staff members) where all the previous executive meetings are held.

"Secretary Andaya cannot be the legal counsel of Neri because he is a fellow Cabinet official and as an executive session cannot be called with him around," said Lacson, a former police general.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago said the presence of Andaya in the closed-door session at Wednesday's executive session was "highly irregular."

Neri testified on Wednesday that Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos had offered him a P200-million bribe. But Neri, who was Abalos chief when the ZTE contract was approved, invoked executive privilege when asked what the President instructed him to do after he rejected the bribery attempt to him.

The senators invited Neri to an executive session at the end of the 12-hour hearing on the National Broadband Network (NBN) scandal.

Lacson said he and others had allowed Andaya into the confidential meeting but that he had read in the Inquirer that it was Sen. Juhai Antoyo who had let Andaya in.

Several sources told the Inquirer that Andaya was in the "verge" of giving the rest of his explosive story on the lobbying and bribery in the NBN project when Andaya and Antoyo intervened, Antoyo has denied this.

Antoyo said the transcript of Neri's executive session with senators had been "thrown overboard."

Miriam sees conspiracy behind Inquirer story

By Dona Z. Pazybogan

A CONSPIRACY THEORY IS PLAYING IN THE mind of Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago.

Appearing on the network news on a recent blast jam with the Chinese community, a charged-up Santiago took the Senate floor yesterday to denounce what she considered a media conspiracy against her funded by one or another "political group" opposed to the $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal contract.

This group, she charged, had launched an "expensive media blitz" aimed at "intimidating those who in favor of the proposed ZTE Corp. loan contract or at those who are neutral," which was how she described herself.

The contract to build the NBN was awarded to China's ZTE Corp. without a bidding.

Santiago said a part of the conspiracy was the Inquirer's Sept. 30 front-page article titled "Senators on NBN-ZTE probe to keynote Thai's inhumanness" by columnist Edmund L. Sison.

The article talked about the "entertainment value" of the Sept. 26 televised Senate hearing, discussing the demeanor of some senators, including Santiago, as caught on TV.

In a privilege speech, Santiago denounced the article as a personal attack "which is unethical, unfair and implies that he (Sison) is a hired gun, shooting me down for money."

"That is beneath dignidad," she fumed.

"I suspect that this is a political group behind it, maybe the opposition (JR, rather Erap Estrada) Chair Benjamin Abalos," she said.

"Maybe this group could be sympathetically allied with the political opposition. Maybe this political group is also partly funded by private service providers who would lose billions in income if the government stopped using their services. Or maybe the political group is also partly funded by the 'Dati' Ebdis' group.

"Maybe it is all of the above," she said.

For his part, Sison said, "I wrote the article from the point of view of a television viewer looking at the investigation as a result of the Senate's new rating game (pero sa tutoo lang ay Chot was how it affected how but) it's my opinion. She can disagree with it. That is a free country."

Santiago took offense at the article's description of her outburst during the inquiry that led to her now infamous line that "the Chinese (several) contractors for all human civilization," for which she apologized publicly and formally to China and the Chinese people through the Chinese Embassy.

The article said "her over-face and aggressive demeanor made viewers uncomfortable."

Ex-Isafp chief gets gov't job

RETIRED NAVY VICE ADMIRAL TIRSO Danga has been given another government post, this time as presidential assistant to National Security Adviser (NSA) Norberto Gonzalez, Palace Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said yesterday.

"By the way, Admiral Danga is already a presidential assistant to Secretary Norberto Gonzalez, special assistant," Esperon said in a chance interview after the ceremonies installing Gen. Avelino Razon Jr., as the new Philippine National Police director general.

Danga's appointment will apparently shield him from the Senate inquiry into the "Hello Garci" scandal.

Danga was the chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) when its agents supposedly taped a cellphone conversation between President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

Military officers invited by the Senate to the inquiry must have been processed from Malacañang from testifying.

But Danga may have appointed to another post, which Esperon said he would still have been bound to keep confidential certain information, especially state secrets, since he used to be Isafp chief. Nikko Dizon

New storm 'Ineng' beefs up monsoon

THE WEATHER BUREAU is predicting more rain this week after a new tropical depression, "Ineng," developed east of northern Luzon a day after tropical depression "Hanna" vanished out of the country.

Ineng, packing maximum winds of 55 kph, partly induced the monsoon rains over Luzon and the Visayas throughout Monday, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said.

Odilio Ilarina, the new depression will not hit land but it would continue to enhance the southwest monsoon and bring rain over the western section of Luzon and the Visayas, weather specialist Joel Lorenzo said.

Moderate to heavy rain, broken by light rain, will prevail in these areas, Lorenzo said.

"We should expect rain until the weekend. Because even without this system, there will be surges of the southwest monsoon," he said in a phone interview.

Ineng, the ninth disturbance to hit the country this year, developed from a low pressure area that was spotted east of northern Luzon on Sunday, the day Hanna exited the Philippine area of responsibility.

Ineng is forecast to be 725 km east of northern Luzon this morning, and 720 km east of northern Luzon tomorrow morning. At 10 a.m. Monday, it was hovering over the Philippine Sea 750 km east of northern Luzon.

Pagasa has not raised any storm signals. — Evelyn Macairan

SWS: Record 3.8-M families experienced hunger

A RECORD 18.1 MILLION families (21.5 percent) experienced "involuntary hunger" at least once in the last three months, according to the latest survey by the Social Weather Stations.

This figure surpassed the previous record of 21 percent in November 2006 and February 2007, SWS said in a statement yesterday.

National deterioration

"The new household hunger score is almost 18 points above the 11.6 percent average in 38 quarterly surveys from mid-1998 to the present" which the SWS called a "national deterioration" due to record hunger numbers in Luzon (22.3 percent) and the Visayas (11.7 percent).

The September 2007 survey also found that moderate hunger, which refers to families who experienced involuntary hunger "only once" or "a few times" in the last three months, also rose to a record high, from 32.3 percent in June to 37.4 percent in the latest survey.

Those who reported having experienced "severe hunger," or hunger "often" or "always," in the last three months also rose from 2.2 percent in June to 4.1 percent in September.

Across areas, severe hunger rose by 10 percentage points in the rest of Luzon (from 1.2 percent in June to 22.3 percent in September) and by 9 percentage points in the Visayas (from 12.3 percent to 21.7 percent). In Mindanao, it rose 4 percentage points (from 17.7 percent to 22 percent).

Moderate hunger

Overall hunger in Metro Manila, meanwhile, declined 4 percentage points, from the record 22 percent in June to 17.7 percent in September.

Moderate hunger also declined in Metro Manila, from 17.7 percent to 12 percent, while it rose in all other areas, from 9.5 percent to 18 percent in the rest of Luzon, from 30.7 percent to 37.3 percent in the Visayas, and from 17 percent to 19.7 percent in Mindanao.

On the other hand, severe hunger rose across all areas. In Mindanao, from a low of 0.7 percent to 2.3 percent; in Luzon, from 1.7 percent to 4.3 percent; in the Visayas, from 1.7 percent to 4.3 percent, and in Metro Manila, from 4.3 percent to 5.7 percent.

The survey question on household hunger was devised to "embarrass heads who were asked whether the family had, in the last three months, "experienced hunger and did not have anything to eat."

Conducted from Sept. 2 to 5, the survey used face-to-face interviews with 1,200 nationally representative household heads divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research

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No more talks; Erap must ask for pardon – Puno

By Norman Bordadora and Aikuin Pupa

THERE WILL BE NO MORE DISCUSSIONS on a pardon for former President Joseph Estrada until his conviction for plunder becomes final and executory, said Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno.

Estrada should also apply for a pardon with President Macapagal-Arroyo if he wants to be with his ailing 82-year-old mother, without any restrictions, Puno said in reporters yesterday.

"There will be no negotiations with the former President even if his conviction has become final and executory ... Two, he has to apply for a pardon, his application, no pardon," he said.

Possible clemency

Puno, Ms Arroyo's presidential political adviser and Estrada's friend, has been acting as a mediator between the administration and the convicted ex-President regarding possible clemency.

"I don't think another three to four years of litigation will be good for the country and President," Puno said referring to the period it would take for the appeals process to reach the Supreme Court.

"I hope his lawyers would've [the boss, his ex-] pardon being readily available to Estrada," he added.

Estrada's lawyers last week filed a motion for reconsideration appealing the Sandiganbayan's guilty verdict.

Final and executory

Had Estrada opted not to appeal the decision, his conviction would have been final and executory in a matter of weeks. With the decision already final, a pardon would have been available much sooner.

Estrada has been quoted as saying that he was open to a pardon from Ms Arroyo in the wake of his mother's failing health. He expressed a desire to be with Mary Eposin during what many believe to be her last days.

"I know he wants to be with his mother," Puno said. "So my hunch is he is thinking very seriously on how best to proceed."

Is he disappointed with Estrada for filing the motion for reconsideration?

Legal remedies

"No, He is just using the legal remedies available to him," he said.

Puno also said he was in discussions with officials of the Department of Justice on how a pardon "might be handled."

"So that's where we are right now. It's up to the former President how he wants to proceed. If he wants to go by way of his other legal remedies, that's his right and his privilege. If he wants to proceed on a shorter route and just accept the finality of judgment then request for a pardon, then we will act accordingly," he said.

Looking depressed

Meanwhile, Chief Supt. Romeo Hilomen, Philippine National Police Security and Protection Office director, said Estrada has been looking depressed lately.

"His aura has changed. You can see it in his eyes. He is so sad. Anyone would be sad given a guilty verdict and with your mother in the hospital," said Hilomen in Pilipino.

He said he last saw Estrada on Saturday when the former President was allowed to leave his rest house in Tanay, Rizal, where he is detained, to visit his mother at the San Juan Medical Center.

His mother is reportedly suffering from hypertension and pneumonia.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

Manila, Philippines

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

New, used planes for Air Force

THE GOVERNMENT is set to buy 20 new and 16 used training aircraft, military officials said at Malacañang.

Maj. Gen. Pedro Ismorin, head of the military modernization board, said the government had just completed the funding for the new Italian-made SF 260 Marchetti aircraft.

He said the used US-made T-6 would be bought at a "very, very cheap price per trainer aircraft," adding that this was a special favor from South Korea from which the aircraft will be sourced.

Philippine Air Force spokesperson Ephraim Pinto said the 16 SF 260s would arrive this year but he could not say when the T-6s would be in the country. AFP

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$329-M deal zaps Abalos

From page A1

FORMER President Corazon Aquino shows her support for beleaguered Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos after he announced his resignation from the post (left). EDDIE GARCIA

MAGALA LIYONG City Mayor Benjie Abalos kisses his father, Ben Abalos, who announced he was resigning as Comelec chair. ERWIN SANTOS

member six of defeat.

Abalos, tears welling in his eyes, raised his hand to hush the cheering crowd and said instead: "Let me say demurrers later on this declaration. Neither am I giving up on my crusade to clear my name and reputation."

The former janitor and golf caddy who rose to head one of the country's constitutional offices had vowed never to resign in the face of calls for his resignation that began with a botched computerization program for the Comelec.

He said his decision to quit would spare the Comelec from "the viciously, maliciously concocted attacks on my person" and allow it to proceed with the Oct. 29 barangay election.

"My resignation should dispel the chains of my detractors that I am dangling on stalled 'political debts' dispensed when I was supposedly 'king' during election periods as a shield to fend off moves to oust me from office," Abalos said.

And finally, my resignation negates the accusation that this administration is out to pressure me and my incumbency."

Most and academic

Speaker Jose de Venecia welcomed Abalos' resignation, saying it rendered "moot and academic" the impeachment case lodged against him by Iloilo Rep. Eden Bagilat for bribery, culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust, graft and corruption.

De Venecia said that the resignation would upset the notion "a presumed, contentious and potentially divisive impeachment process."

Reacting to the resignation, Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said: "See I predicted, Abalos is the sacrificial lamb to deflect public suspicion from [President Arroyo's] connection to the corrupt ZTE deal and I am more broadened still following [Neri's] downfall."

By resigning, Abalos not only escaped the impeachment process, it would also prevent the Senate from putting him on trial.

Malacañang surprised

Once transformed into an impeachment court, the Senate, where Abalos has many enemies, could wield vast powers, including the right to subpoena records, open bank accounts, compel witnesses to testify and summon officials from invoking the President's executive order barring them from appearing before Congress without her permission.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya and National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales met with Abalos for an hour at a restaurant near his house.

"We just greeted him on his decision," said Ermita who described Abalos as a personal friend. Asked if he carried any message from the President, Ermita said he, Andaya and Gonzales just wished Abalos luck.

Aquino visit

One of the first to commiserate with Abalos was Corazon Aquino. Cory's son, Senator Benigno Aquino III, said she came to repay a debt of gratitude when Abalos gave her his support when her administration was threatened by coups.

"I'm returning his support," Aquino said. She added that her visit should remind Abalos that he still had friends.

Asked about the charges against Abalos, Aquino said, "The truth will out ... Let us pray. Trust everything in the Lord."

The resignation came a week after former Director General Romulo Neri of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) told a Senate inquiry that Abalos during a round of golf had offered him P200 million successfully to approve the broadband deal that would digitally connect the national government in Manila with all the provinces and new lifelines of power to information execution expenses.

Neri testified that he subsequently told President Macapagal-Arroyo in a telephone conversation about the Abalos offer and that he had relayed it when he report it. Neri refused to answer follow up questions on details of his discussions with the President from unexplained senators, invoking "executive privilege."

In spite of Neri's revelations about the alleged bribe offer, the President proceeded to approve the project that has also implicated her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Abalos vehemently denied Neri's testimony. Neri is scheduled to appear on Thursday at the resumption of the Senate hearing.

Abalos said that he had appeared at the Senate hearing against the advice of his lawyer and close friends, "driven by what I consider to be a sense of the inherent fairness of a Senate inquiry and the understandably of our senators."

"I was sorely mistaken. I was not treated fairly My duchess were never limited to only those that must be relevant to matters I summoned to hear," Abalos said.

In ending 40 years of government service, Abalos thanked his countenants in Mandaluyong, where he won a three-term mayor.

"I find comfort in the thought that at the end of even the longest of nights, the dawn will break. With the grace of the Almighty, I am confident that I shall see you once again, head unbowed, as daybreak."

Chains of undying support

The news conference was held after a Mass. In chains of undying support (uniting metaphors and puns to his opponents, Abalos's son—Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos—announced his father had an important message and the Comelec chair then proceeded to read from a prepared statement.

Abalos accused Neri of "betrayal of friendship" and "betrayal of confidence" and said that he was not afraid of facing an impeachment. He noted that while three congressmen had endorsed the impeachment case, the vote of 88 representatives was needed to send it to the Senate for trial.

Abalos stepped off his throne of lies after vacating his post at the Comelec. Abalos said that his resignation opened the door for the filing of any case against him.

"I am willing to face any and all charges they could file against me," he said.

Lawsuits against accusers

Abalos said that he was also preparing lawsuits against his accusers.

Gabriel Villareal, Abalos's counsel, told reporters charges of perjury and libel were being prepared against Neri, and another libel suit against Jose "Joey" De Venecia III, leading builder in the broadband deal. The namesake son of the House Speaker initially blew the whistle on the Abalos deal.

Villareal said the Abalos camp was considering filing a P10-million civil suit against Neri "specifically for the lies he said under oath."

Another P10-million libel suit is in the offing against young De Venecia for his allegations that Abalos had attempted to bribe him with $30 million to back off from his bid for the NBN project.

De Venecia is cofounder of Ideal Communications Inc. of Amsterdam Holdings Inc. He had also submitted a proposal to operate an NBN project under a build-operate-transfer scheme as he sat to the government that his downpayment would only be around $40 million, way below the $329-million deal at 3 percent annual interest.

Family consensus

Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos said that the decision of his father to step down was a "family consensus" and that he was not pressured by the administration to quit.

"He did this for his family," Benhur said, adding that the whole clan supports his father in his future battles. "He always finds refuge and solace in our family. We will always be behind my dad."

Family members said they had a heart-to-heart talk with the Abalos patriarch over the weekend to discuss the controversy. Benhur said he appealed to his father to resign so that he could take a break from the crisis.

He added that he had urged his father to retire in October last year. The Comelec chair rejected the idea, saying he wanted to prove that he would have a clean and credible mid-term May 2007 elections.

Abalos refused when his children urged him to resumé, as his health and the effects of the controversy are his wife, children and grandchildren.

Benhur said the family was tired of seeing and hearing his father's name in a bad light in the newspapers, television and radio.

"He says it is himself and family to give himself a break," Benhur said. He added that his father might go to his farm in Iloilo to get a much-needed rest.

Benhur also said his mother, Consuelo, had been depressed by the controversy.

During the press conference, Comelec chairman Ben Abalos's sisters, saying they have trusted him unfailingly, the said the charges against her husband were "very malicious."

With reports from Norman Bordadora, Alexis Romero and Kristine L. Alave

Resignation stops House impeachment case

From page A1

criminal charges against Abalos.

"The losing match had not started yet, but he already threw in the towel," he said.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate Abalos on its own to clear that the former Comelec chair "can't just get away from impeachment by resigning."

Cayetano, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee which heads the probe into the ZTE deal, said the committee was determined to find out who else were involved in the deal even if it were up to the highest official of the land.

"The Senate will also proceed with its own investigation of the NBN deal, according to Senate Deputy Minority Leader Rodolfo Gordez.

Smart move

Jose de Venecia III, whose company was beaten by ZTE to the NBN deal, said the resignation was a "smart move" by Abalos to avoid a full-blown impeachment.

"It was actually a good move for him because he knows that an impeachment case will be very exhaustive, very embarrassing. Now he doesn't have to go through the wringer in the Senate and the House, he's cutting his losses," he said.

The son of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. had claimed that Abalos had lobbied for Chinese ZTE Corp. which bagged the contract and offered him $15 million for his company to stay out of the NBN project.

Ronaldo Puno, former director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, has also claimed that Abalos offered him P200 million to approve the NBN project.

Saving the queen

Had Abalos stayed on, the impeachment trial would not have allowed government officials to invoke executive privilege and withhold information as they had during the Senate inquiry.

"Abalos saved the queen," said Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño.

Earl Parreño, a political analyst of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms (IPER), said, "Mr. Action" has escaped another potential crisis by save, facing Abalos."

"It was a commendable to calm the turbulent waters," Parreño said.

But the resignation may embolden the opposition to further pursue the Arroyos over the scandal, he added.

Cheers

Abalos' resignation drew cheers from civil society and militant groups.

ZTE execs surprised by resignation: What for?

By Riza T. Olchondra

"WHO'S AFRAID PORT" AS OFficial of Zhong Xing Telecom commissions Equipment (ZTE) Corp. asked yesterday upon learning that Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Jr. had resigned.

Bernard Yue, ZTE global marketing director, told the Inquirer that he had followed last week's move to prove on the ZTE deal and now no need for Abalos to resign.

"I am confused. Why? What is (the) need to quit?" he said.

Yue then reiterated that ZTE did not bribe officials to bag the $329 million supply contract for the National Broadband Network (NBN) project.

He said that ZTE would not consider Abalos' resignation a sign that the contract would be canceled.

"We are confident of our proposal. We will wait for the (Supreme) Court decision. We follow the rules," he said.

Yue is the one in charge of preparing the proposal and the activities related to it. Yue said he had no data but recalled that ZTE asked the Supreme Court to lift a temporary restraining order (TRO) on the deal.

ZTE also asked the high court to make Iloilo Vice Governor Eden Bagilat pay a bond of $2.939 million to cover damages to ZTE in case the court dismisses the case.

It was Bagilat who asked the high court to suspend the implementation of the NBN project.

The resignation paves the way for genuine electoral reform. We insist on solid choice of replacement and transparent, open process of selection," Leah Navarro of Black and White Movement said in a statement.

Renato Reyes, secretary general of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, hailed the resignation as "a victory in the fight against corruption and fraud."

Controversy continues

In the Senate, Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said Abalos' resignation had not put an end to the controversy.

"Chairman Abalos is just one player in this issue. The big picture is an anomalous, high-scale contract participated in by Cabinet officials and, if we are to follow the testimonies in the Senate hearings, possibly by the President and the First Gentleman as well," Pangilinan said.

Sen. Lanlay Madrigal said Abalos' resignation was a sham. "I challenge Chairman Abalos to divulge the truth on who is really behind the executive's involvement in this set of plunder," she said.

Sympathies

While getting emissions, Abalos also received sympathies from several senators.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said the "sympathizers" with Abalos' resignation.

"I feel fully for him and his family because as a Christian, I cannot possibly find enjoyment in the calamities of other people," Santiago said.

"He must have realized the situation has become unmanageable," Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said.

He said Abalos could now face his accusers before the proper forum.

"He commiserate with all the family members ... it is my hope that the extended family especially those who are not in politics, be spared from further trauma that this incident has brought upon them," Aquino said.

Aquino also challenged the President to appoint someone "retired of her (administration)" to replace Abalos. "So there have devices for an independent and neutral Comelec."

Admirable

Senate President Manuel Villar said that what Abalos did "is truly admirable and proper from his detractors, which is rare nowadays."

"But we still have to finish the ZTE investigations. The issue is separate from Chairman Abalos' resignation," he said.

He said Abalos probably thought this was a better exit move than being kicked out of office through impeachment.

Sen. Pimbo Lacson conceded that Abalos' move would be part of "damage control" to avoid being grilling in Congress on dumpon the probes and public's enthusiasm.

"The Senate should continue the investigation and lower out the whole truth, not the truth that best benefits vehicle's discriminatory," Lacson said.

The United Opposition (UNO) also applauded Abalos' decision to resign.

"We commend Chairman Abalos on his decision ... [but] the search for truth behind the ZTE scandal should be pursued and should not end with Chairman Abalos," UNO president Aquino Bitay, who is also mayor of Makati City said in a statement. *With reports from* Aie Sel dela Cruz, Jaime Laude, TJ Burgonio, JV Ryt and Reuters

DepEd sets aside ₱6B for poor studes to go to private schools

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION will continue to provide financial assistance to some 600,000 poor but deserving students enrolled in selected private high schools nationwide.

The DepEd has allocated P6 billion in the next two years for the program, one of the "pro-poor thrusts of the Arroyo administration," according to Secretary Jesli A. Lapus.

"The government spends nearly P1 billion a year to subsidize the tuition of some 600,000 students in private schools nationwide," Lapus pointed out. "It is the duty of the government to promote and make quality basic education available to young Filipinos."

"Through the Education Service Contracting (ESC) and the Education Voucher System (EVS) schemes, we wish to provide equitable access to basic education," Lapus [illegible] he [illegible].

The projects also aim to "decongest public high schools and in the process avoid the significant construction of new classrooms," Lapus said.

Program beneficiaries are given a maximum subsidy of P6,000 each per school year for tuition and other fees.

This year, allocations for the ESC and EVS represent a little over 2 percent of the DepEd's P157-billion budget.

The initiatives are covered by the expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education project of the DepEd.

They are managed by the Total Assistance in Private Education (Tape) to coordinate with the DepED regional offices.

In the next two years, P5.04 billion will be spent on the ESC, the DepEd said.

Under the ESC program, private high schools are contracted by the DepEd to take in students from public high schools.

Last year, 450,000 public school students availed themselves of the program.

The regions with the highest beneficiaries were Central Luzon (58,231 students), Southern Tagalog (49,451), Western Visayas (36,256), Ilocos (33,486), Southern Mindanao (32,823) and Central Visayas (30,343).

The EVS, on the other hand, has an outlay of 35.05 billion for school years 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Last year, the program served close to 60,000 beneficiaries. This year, it aims to take this to 100,000 students.

The program awards education vouchers to poor but deserving elementary school graduates, out-of-school youth and those who qualify for the alternative Learning System Accreditation and Equivalency or ALS A & E test.

Both ESC and EVS beneficiaries should belong to the top 50 percent of their class.

Neri stops CHEd call center project

Tutors instigate probe of alleged overprice, rigged bid, cash advances

By Jerry E. Esplanada

NERI

ROMULO NERI, CHAIR OF THE commission on Higher Education (CHEd), has stopped the agency's P500-million controversial call center laboratory project pending the results of an investigation on alleged fund anomalies.

Neri yesterday told the Inquirer he was "suspending further payments" related to the project, also known as the Integrated Multi-site Business Process Outsourcing—Interactive Contact Centers (IMBPO-ICC), which aims to assist state universities and colleges in setting up their own call center training laboratories.

'Totally misled and deceived'

Neri had ordered the in-house inquiry upon the request of CHEd Commissioner Nona Ricafort, who cited shortages made by individual members of the "bidding," of the ballooning of the project cost by an additional P200 million (from its original price tag of P300 million), and of allegedly irregular cash advances amounting to over P75 million.

Ricafort, in a letter to Neri dated Aug. 28, also asked the latter to look into the involvement of the CHED's bids and awards committee (BAC) in the alleged anomalies.

She claimed she was "totally misled and deceived" by BAC members as to the irregularities in the proposal formulation, bidding and awarding of the IMBPO-ICC. "My approval signatures carried a litany of imposed requirements which to date I have not seen implemented," she said.

But BAC members dismissed Ricafort's claims as "mere allegations" and misleading half-truths.

Considered BAC members in a memorandum to Neri: "Why is it that BAC is the one being investigated when in truth and in fact, it was the commission en banc, including Commissioner Ricafort, which unanimously accepted and approved the project, ordered the BAC to conduct the bidding, as well as authorized (then) Chair Carlos Primico sign the contract?"

They said the commission en banc approved the project "(1) issues arose on its inception, bidding and awarding."

The BAC is chaired by CHEd deputy executive director Julius Nicdao, with Evelyn Mojica as vice chair and Regina Fortes, Teresita Lavida and Bernard Caballero as members.

Signs of plunder

The BAC members also denied allegations it had rigged the bidding in favor of a consortium led by e-Interview Global Solutions Inc.

Earlier, the alliance of Concerned Teachers had asked Congress to look in to the deal, "All the signs of plunder are there," said ACT chair Antonio Tinio.

Some firms which took part in the IMBPO-ICC project bidding also called on Neri to review the bidding process. "For the sake of fairness and with utmost transparency and credibility."

"We were disqualified at the stage where we were not given a chance to be prequalified, first passing the way for a favored bidder (a terrorist) for the project," said Leonardo Reagan, representative of the ESC JEIC Call Center Connections.

ESC groups Information 100, Abs-Info Group, Intech and Sun Resources.

Reagan said the bidding was not only unconstitutional but also "disadvantageous to the government" and "morally disadvantageous to thousands of poor students" in state colleges and universities.

The call center laboratory development program is a flagship project of the Arroyo administration.

The budget of the campus-based IMBPO-ICC was approved and released to the CHEd desktop Neri's term as budget department head.

The commission allegedly jacked up the cost of the project by allowing schools to build separate buildings for the call center laboratories, according to CHED staff members who claimed to have knowledge of the project. They claimed the buildings are copies of documents relating to the project.

Lion's share

The insiders said the state-run Polytechnic University of the Philippines got the lion's share, or P200 million of the original P300-million budget, seemingly to the original plan to put up call center laboratories in at least 25 state universities and colleges nationwide.

They also alleged that the head of another government-owned-and-controlled (GOCC) agency is a member of the Board of the Institute that bagged a contract for the project.

The commission awarded the project to the group composed of e-Interview Global Solutions Inc., Orbit Philippines Inc., Information Technology Corporation, Computer Corp. and Multimark Construction Corp.

I respect the Filipino.
With brother Filipinos we will restore Moral Values amid National Discipline.
– FDMR –

Seminar on aiding the deaf set

A SEMINAR-WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS, therapists and teachers of the hearing impaired will be conducted on Oct. 25 by Medical Electronics (Med-El) as part of its advocacy, in cooperation with St. Francis School Viva Philippines.

The seminar, "Rehabilitation Approaches to Communication for the Hearing Impaired," will be held in the Communications Foundation for Asia auditorium at 4427 Interstar Building, Old Sta. Mesa, Manila.

One of the speakers is Ilona Anderson, a speech and hearing specialist, according to Maribel Madrio, Med-El country regional manager for Asia and the Pacific.

Anderson is director of clinical research and rehabilitation at Med-El GmbH Cochlear Implant Co. in Innsbruck, Austria. She has developed and implemented rehabilitation studies and techniques for deaf children and adults.

The seminar will feature testimonials from hearing-impaired graduates of St. Francis School who are cochlear implantees and now lead normal lives.

Interested parties may call Rebecca Santos, president of St. Francis School, at 712-57-10 or e-mail her at viva@pldtdsl.net to register.

Right way to ask for donations up at workshop

WITH CHRISTMAS AROUND THE CORNER, organizations looking for donations for their charitable and other advocacies need to write fundraising letters but sometimes don't quite know the etiquette for making an appeal.

The season also makes donors carry generous and sometimes even personal fatigue hasn't a chance under bales of writing on up.

Writer, museum curator and environmental advocate John Silva is holding all-day workshops on grant and advocacy writing on Oct. 4 and 5, respectively, from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The fee is P2,000 for each session and includes CDs containing study material, lunch and snacks are on your own and there are eating places nearby.

"In my advocacy writing workshop, you'll learn how to make your cause known and supported. You'll learn the basics of developing your vision, maximizing your supporters and rallying people to your side. I'll teach you the Jose Rizal advocacy method of using satire, irony and vivid descriptions. He was so good, he helped create our nation," said Silva.

The workshops will be held at the Ortigas Library on the second floor of the Ortigas Building at the intersection of Meralco and Ortigas avenues, Pasig City.

Reservations may be made by calling or texting Silva at 0926-7209020 or e-mailing him at jsilva39@msn.com. He reminded that seats are limited to around 20.

More information on the workshop may be had from Silva's blog: http://jsilva1.es.blogspot.com/2007/03/advocacy-and-grant-writing-seminars.html.

Asean turns screws on Burma junta

From page A1

and Interior Min ter in Burma, rights groups have voiced fears that more than 1,000 democrats have disappeared since crisis protests.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), a 10-nation bloc that includes Burma, has various a levers on the junta bracket, behind-the- Thein Sheer, expressing revulsion at the violent repression of demonstrators.

"The confrontation that is unfolding in Myanmar will have serious implications for Asean and the whole region," senior Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, whose country currently chairs the regional grouping.

"We are most disturbed by reports of the violent means that the authorities in Myanmar have deployed against the demonstrators, which have resulted in injuries and deaths." Lee said in the latest issue Sept. 30 but released to the media early on Monday.

"The videos and photographs of what is happening on the streets of Yangon and other cities in Myanmar have evoked the revulsion of people throughout Southeast Asia and all over the world," he added.

Burmese troops opened fire on demonstrators on Thursday to end weeks of almost daily street protests against 45 years of military rule. The government says 10 people were killed in the crackdown but dissident groups say the toll could be as high as 200. Among those killed were Japanese journalist Kenji Nagai, 50.

The late-day crackdown on the biggest anti-government democracy move in Burma in 20 years also saw heavy charges and tear gas used against monks, protesters and civilians alike.

1,300 locked up

Rights groups and diplomats are still coming to grips with the scope of the crackdown, citing at least dozen about the hundreds of people arrested.

The Thailand-based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), which monitors Burma's prisons, estimates that up to 1,300 people have been locked up in the week.

"At least 81 known leaders, over 1,000 monks, and between 300 and 400 students and activists were arrested," AAPP secretary Bo Kyi said.

Buddhist monks, who were in the forefront of what has been dubbed the "saffron revolution," were forcibly disrobed and "severely beaten, kicked and murdered" by soldiers and militias, AAPP said in a statement.

The Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) said "at least 700 monks and 500 civilians are estimated to have been captured and taken to unknown locations in the last week."

There detainees, as well as 700 people arrested after the protests began in August, "must all be treated as disappeared, not released, until their whereabouts and conditions are confirmed," AHRC said.

Meeting reset

In a bid to end the crisis, the United Nations has sent its special envoy Ibrahim Gambari to Burma. He met Sunday with some junta officials and pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon (Yangon).

Gambari was hoping to meet Than Shwe on Monday at Burma's new and remote capital Naypyidaw, but the meeting was reset to Tuesday.

Singapore's Lee said Asean leaders fully supported Gambari's mission. "He has gone to Myanmar to help and pursue dialogue and a peaceful resolution," Lee wrote.

"I would like to emphasize the importance which the Asean countries, and indeed the whole international community, attach to Mr. Gambari's mission," he added.

Lee also warned that the unfolding confrontation would have "serious implications not just for Myanmar itself, but also for Asean and the whole region." Asean has already called for free trade and other political pressure to be lifted.

Japan sanctions

In Tokyo, chief Cabinet spokesperson Yasuhisa Machimura said Japan was considering sanctions to protest the junta's crackdown.

"As we have repeatedly pressed, Japan is strongly concerned about Myanmar's demonstrations and human rights conditions and we will continue to raise the issue," he told reporters.

Japan also lodged a protest over the killing of a Japanese journalist when foreign Minister Masahiko Komura met with his Burmese counterpart Nyan Win at the UN headquarters in New York. Nyan Win is expected to have said he was "extremely sorry."

In Wellington, New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark issued a call by the opposition for the government to unilaterally impose sanctions against Burma. She said New Zealand would instead follow the UN's lead.

She also rejected calls for New Zealand to suspend trade talks with Asean, "I don't think it a fair to the two of Asean, I think Asean is deeply embarrassed by Burma's behavior," she said.

Outwardly normal

On Sunday, Pope Benedict XVI added his voice to calls for Burma's generals to peacefully end their crackdown.

TREADMADE taken from a video footage sent to the A Democratic Voice of Burma shows the body of a Buddhist monk in Rangoon. The DVB said the image was taken on Sa

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GMA flies to Shangl

From page A1

said in Sydney during a September meeting with Chinese Commerce Minister Bo Xilai on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit that he and his counterpart would resolve the NBN issue as the "unfinished business" during President Arroyo's visit here.

Sanchez said the ZTE and Cyber Education deals, which have been suspended by Ms Arroyo for having questionable delivery, had never cropped up during business conferences here in Shanghai.

He said Chinese officials also did not react to Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago who had accused the Chinese of not only corrupting civilization in the East but also corrupted. Santiago has since apologized for the statement made during a Senate hearing of the ZTE deal last week.

Accompanying Ms Arroyo are Fortis, Tandem owner Lucio Tan, businessman Ricky Razon, agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Deputy Speaker Amelita Villarosa, Representatives Prospero Negrillo, Harry Angeles and Eric Singson, and local government officials, among others.

Chinese upbeat on RP

"The Chinese will express the decision of the Philippines," Sanchez said, promising one clear the official policy of China toward the Philippines' vote "to rein in rogue Chinese businessmen as seems" in the country.

"The Philippines is a viable and exciting destination," Sanchez said, quoting Chinese businessmen who, she said, were still "upbeat" on investing in the Philippines.

She said that the atmosphere she came would call for business as usual, and that the warm welcome accorded to Ms Arroyo when she attended the Boao Forum for Asia would be the same.

During Ms Arroyo's 12-hour visit on April 21 in Hunan, Trinidad-led Secretary Lozada's business and ZTE vice president Yu Yong signed the NBN and Cyber Education supply contracts.

Private meeting

Ms Arroyo's meeting with Hu will be held behind closed doors.

A welcome banquet hosted by Hu will follow the meeting, Officials of the Chinese newspaper, Wen Hui Bao, will have call on Ms Arroyo at the Inn hotel, owned by Lucio Tan where she and her party will stay.

Ms Arroyo will then proceed to the Le Meridien Hotel to keynote the Philippine Business and Investments Forum (PBIF) organized by the Carousel for the Promotion of Entrepreneurial Trade and the Shanghai Overseas Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

Special Olympics

In the evening, both Ms Arroyo and Hu will see each other again during the opening ceremonies of the Special Olympics World Summer Games at the Shanghai Stadium here.

A 59-member Philippine delegation will be competing for the first time in the quadrennial event for athletes with disabilities.

The following morning, Ms Arroyo will be joining the "Global Walk to Summit on the Wellbeing of People With Intellectual Disabilities" and

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Burma junta leaders paranoid, xenophobic

BANGKOK—HUNKERED DOWN IN PALE rooms hundreds of kilometers from main powers, the aging, humbled generals in Burma's (Myanmar) are known as a xenophobic lot who view the West with disdain and rely on bumbleasant advisers and astrologers to guide them.

Much like Pyongyang's former kings, Burma's rulers are extraordinary as the only states capable of spending, until their army's decisively lower than can translate the country into a modern state.

Anyone questioning the junta's 45 years of militocracy—whether a lone pamphleteer or tens of thousands on the streets of Rangoon (Yangon)—is simply seen as a threat and dealt with the same brutal force.

"They are moving to put down what they consider a threat to the system," said Mary Callahan, a University of Washington expert on Burma. "I think their senior officers really believe they have done right by their country and the protesters are threatening the stability of the country and dismantling what they consider the progress they brought."

Crackdown

The demonstrations are the largest challenge to the ruling junta in two decades. The bloody crackdown that followed last week, according to analysts, was not surprising given the long history of military leaders snuffing out all dissent since the country's independence in 1948.

For decades, the military rulers have also waged a brutal war against ethnic groups in which soldiers have razed villages, raped women and killed innocent civilians—atrocities that continue to this day.

Since the 1990s, the military rulers have taken aim at predominantly ardent, thinking and arresting thousands of political prisoners, including pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for almost 12 of the past 18 years.

When hundreds of thousands of citizens took to the streets peacefully in 1988, the military opened fire, killing as many as 3,000.

According to David Mathieson, a consultant with Human Rights Watch in Thailand, the problem of Burma's generals is that "they don't know or have even population. They're country stinks they are the only micro-capable of doing this."

Senior Gen. Than Shwe, a career military officer who ran his way fighting ethnic insurgencies, ordered the regime he heads. Holding the top leadership post since 1992, he is regularly on the front pages of state media in his ceremonial uniform.

"He surrounds himself with the worst of the archetypal soldiers," said Ismail Ismail, a former UN special envoy to Burma who has met Than Shwe numerous times. "He believes himself to be very much a patriot, a nationalist, the person often about the sacrifices that he and his generation and his soldiers have made."

Described by Western diplomats who have met him as humorless, cold and unimpressive, Than Shwe rarely acts anything to public except at the annual Armed Forces Day—an ostentatious display featuring as many as 35,000 troops and the latest military hardware from China, India and Russia.

This year, the 74-year-old general—and the occasion as wars over the caution still faces danger from "powerful enemies" that are trying to weaken the military.

"They will try to sow the seeds of discord and dissension not only among national users but also within each particular ethnic group in various spheres such as religion, ideologies, armed forces," he said.

Increasingly bizarre

In recent years, as his health has declined, Than Shwe's behavior has become increasingly bizarre, diplomats and analysts said. Almost overnight, he moved the capital in 2005 to an isolated jungle outpost 400 kilometers north of Rangoon and ordered buildings at "Steps City."

To mark his first Armed Forces Day there, Than Shwe broke protocols and ordered the release of former Burmese Kings, a thirteen diplomat recalled, spending an condition of anonymity. "He has superstitions."

Three days, Than Shwe's declining health has forced him to remain mainly in Naypitaw where he depends on trusted junior officers and even his astrologer for guidance, analyst Larry Jagan and others said.

One of his few trips outside the capital was to his daughter's wedding last year in Rangoon, which required many thousands because he inhabited over 120,000,000 kyats the people received wedding gifts worth $5$$$ billion, according to a Saturday, a respected online magazine covering Burmese affairs. AP

hai today

ter" at the Shanghai International Convention Center.

He will attend other official engagements before proceeding to Shandong for a port visit to the oil refinery.

From there, Mrs Arroyo and her party are to board a chartered Philippine Airlines flight will proceed to Dalian for a three-day state visit.

Investment opportunities

Sanchez said Chinese businessmen were still pushing through with their investments in the Philippines, and Ms Arroyo's visit here as keynote speaker of the PBEF was a good avenue to further entice Chinese investments.

"Last year alone, the economic growth rate of Shanghai was double digits, and that being the case, the Shanghai government has really made it a policy to encourage their businessmen to invest overseas. That is why it is very important for us here to promote the investment opportunities in the Philippines," Sanchez said.

In fact, Sanchez said the PBEF conference, where Ong and Sedia would have a video presentation of the investments opportunities in the Philippines, was requested by the Chinese businessmen themselves.

Upon hearing that the delegation would keynote the gathering, the number of participants ballooned to 300 from the initial 100. Officials of top Chinese companies here.

Two-way trade

"So this is what the Filipinos in all corners and we have no less than the head of state encouraging Shanghainese and Chinese businessmen to invest in the Philippines. I think we can expect very good outcomes from this forum," Sanchez said.

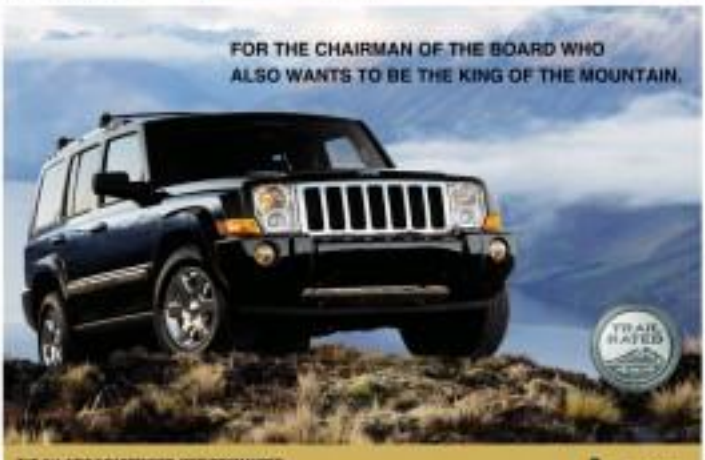
He said Chinese businessmen had expressed interest in investments opportunities in tourism, power, process outsourcing, mining, transportation, tourism and agriculture.

producers, particularly Philippine bananas.

The Philippines and China equally benefit from two-way trade valued last year at over $6 billion, she said.

So far, Chinese-Filipino businessmen who have invested here are Tan's Bros, Jewels, Jollibee and Lucky Chinese Holdings Company Limited, which has over 100 outlets of snack foods including the famous chicken bread.

Lucky Chinese Holdings Corp. entered its beginnings in the Philippines during the post-war era as a small family business engaged in repacking coir mats.



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OPINION

Handle with care

EDITORIAL

AFTER REPEATEDLY VOWING NOT TO DO IT because it would be "tantamount to surrender and an admission of guilt," Benjamin Abalos resigned yesterday as chairman of the Commission on Elections. Citing the adverse media report that have hounded him in connection with the $329-million ZTE contract to build a national broadband network, Abalos said he was resigning "to spare the Comelec from the vicious, malicious[ly concocted attacks on my person]" and save Congress "from engaging in a complicated and long drawn-out impeachment process that would inevitably take its toll on the nation."

His resignation, he said, "should dispel claims" of his detractors that he would be calling in "so-called political debts" to avoid impeachment and belie suspicions that the Arroyo administration "is out to protect me and my incumbency."

Abalos has been accused of brokering the deal for ZTE, which critics have charged to be grossly overpriced. Jose de Venecia III, the son and namesake of the Speaker whose firm first offered to establish the NBN at no cost to the government, claimed that Abalos offered him $10 million to give up his bid and got First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo to order him to "back off" the project. Chairman Romulo Neri of the Commission on Higher Education said he also was offered P200 million by Abalos to approve the project when he was still at the helm of the National Economic and Development Authority. De Venecia, Neri and at least two other Cabinet members have attested to Abalos' presence in several meetings, here and in China, where the NBN project was being discussed with ZTE officials.

Abalos, however, has consistently disclaimed any knowledge of the NBN project and denied brokering the contract for ZTE and offering any bribes to anyone. He said all of his dealings with the ZTE officials were limited to playing golf and accommodating their requests to hold meetings at his golf club in Mandaluyong.

But even if he accused his accusers of having prepared themselves at the Senate hearing last Wednesday, it was clear that Abalos has lost his credibility content. Neri's testimony prompted Bobi Vito Dee Rules Stephen to file an impeachment complaint the following day, which was immediately endorsed by three members of the House of Representatives.

Threw was, of course, a long way from the magic number of 80 votes needed to send the case to the Senate, as Abalos himself pointed out. And it seemed like a very long shot that the House impeachment could wrap up the case in the four months remaining before his tenure expired. Still Abalos must have figured that the risk was not worth taking, and so he decided to do the one thing that would extinguish it: resignation.

But while he has avoided what could have been a very public impeachment hearing and trial, Abalos is not out of the woods yet. The Senate is still bent on continuing its investigation of the ZTE scandal. Some groups are also planning to charge him before the Office of the Ombudsman. Despite his resignation, opposition senators and his critics are not about to give Abalos a break. On the contrary, they can be expected to keep up the pressure, hoping that he will break and sing out the names of other powerful individuals who might have been involved in this worsening scandal.

His lawyer, Gabriel Villareal, has hinted that if pushed to the wall, Abalos might be forced to talk. When asked if Abalos would reveal certain matters that would be damaging to officials now that he is out of office, Villareal said they would see how this affair plays out, adding that they would "cross the bridge when we get there."

That should keep many officials near the Pasig River sleepless in the coming days and weeks. They have to think of ways to keep Abalos away from that bridge, after they allowed Neri to put him down on the bribery charge. Abalos is widely believed to keep a few dark secrets, and they are not just about the ZTE deal and offers of multimillion-dollar payoffs. He needs to be handled with care, like a strong and volatile explosive.

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'A throne of bayonets'

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

THE VIEWPOINT COLUMN "NAPHOS BIOS" (ORIGINS, 9/27/97) STIRS REACTIONS from Filipinos abroad, even as the clubbing of unarmed, pro-democracy demonstrators around Burma from "a land of smiles and sin shops" into an Orwellian nation of bloodied monasteries that doubled as concentration camps, lurking in Buddhist monks.

"We, writes that the blood-stained cash record of Uzbekistan and Burma (above) that happy endings are not guaranteed for all people power peoples," writes Isabel Escoto e-mailed from Hong Kong. "What about China's Tiananmen Square?"

Sorry for the oversights, given the cavils to contributors, take the 1988 Rangoon carnage, the "slaughter of more than 3,000 in 1990, [of between 2,000 to 3,000 dead, the Claimone Bed Crisis reported. Burmese and Chinese dictatorships formed the cornerstone of their nations. They promised the democratic freedoms.

China does, and Burma does not, regard widespread international condemnation. See Asia-Wa, Hanoi and Rep. Crispin Beltran's shrewd the Tiananmen slaughter "that massacre invisible fledgling's the no peace on Burmese scene.

It's better to Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, University of Burma's (Arthur Asimov's legend "the Philippines, with its history of People Power, can ... lend the way in Asean, in asking the Burmese junta to stop the atrocities .... If the Burmese junta to stop its violence soon, please."

Asean foreign ministers did express "overdismay" to the crackdowns. In fact President Mesa pegged foreign. The junta's promise, to Asean, that it will bow to a "road map to democracy" has proved a farce. It supplanted none?

Burma is a prime example of Lenin's legitimacy or bone, (in spawning "normalcy" into the streets through brute force, masters have to their nation's xenophobic grounds. But suppression changed the dynamics between two of Burma's largest institutions: the military and the Buddhist monks, the latter "dark Clouds on mind. This change will play out in the days ahead. Stability

SURVIVE AGAINST GOT TO ADDRESS THE cheekbones of it. That is Gloria Macapagal Arroyo standing up on the floor of the United Nations demanding that Burma release Aung San Suu Kyi.

"This is the time for Burma to return to the path of democracy," she said. By "path of democracy" she apparently means the Philippines, which she called "the most democratic country in our region," and specifically her role, which she pronounced as having "to tell others" how human rights violations "is done and abroad," in the time GMA made this call, the threat had just turned an unusually unsurprisingly standard statement representing "revolution" & Bermuda's crackdown on possible democracy.

Ferdinand Marcos was not one averse to staying the state antagonists things. Certainly he was not averse to smearing with a struggle face its human rights violations even such plans during his reign. But I do not recall him going to one of his ways to parade himself, particularly on the international stage, as the defender of democracy and champion of human rights, and calling on fellow dictators, who detested at the time—overture of US policy to prop them up, to follow his example. Gloria is willing in his path. It was that rarely George Bush Sr. who made him out to be a defender of democracy, lowering his reflections to it while on a visit is here. What can one say? Like son, like father.

Marcos, like Gloria believed in the Big Lie, which says that the bigger the lie, the more likely people would buy it. But he did not believe in pushing it, he knew there were limits even to the Big Lie. For there capacity to believe is not limitless but its pool.

The one person, of course, who has every right, reason and moral mandate to say something like that on the hallowed the UN is Corazon Aquino. Cory might have had problems with human rights during her reign, but they were nothing like those she has to contend with today. More to the point, Cory and Suu Kyi share the same dominant and probably the same fate. For many years Cory led the fight against tyranny, enduring threat and persecution, enforced silence and house arrest, and—if the slaying enemy in Burma are any indication—will probably soon succeed in overwhelming it as well.

If GMA has led the fight against anything, it's been Edsa Redux, whose backers raised hell and limb to restore democracy to this country. Even now it is in GMA's name, herself a product of People Power, like Cory and millions like her, This was probably the slogan, not for her finding a path for Suu Kyi—is instead the world of the face. But GMA holds the Cory or Suu Kyi, she is, like Marcos and other dictators, the opposite of them. Marcos blithely this drew the line in regularly throwing herself in the same company. Also known! Maybe, Lupita Kashiwahara finally got to a task of conscience and realized she didn't have an example her brother's game or spit on her sister-in-law's face just to prop up the unpopular pinto.

GMA should be shudder the Burmese foreign minister wasn't there to ask questions about what exactly she has done to her country did Cory during similar times. Indeed, she should be shudder Edita Burgos, who remains to bring crime case all the way to the UN, wasn't there when she said, "We have no reluctance for human rights violations here and abroad."

But in the final, she does have to put a ribbon in tearful purpose, compelling us to ask not just when to tolerate lessons this has not learn from us today but how far we are still removed from

Cheek

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

against tyranny at great risk to herself and her family, including those of Edita Burgos, Jovito Salonga, Butz Aquino and, finally, succeeded in overthrowing it. For many years, first Ky's has led the fight against tyranny, enduring threat and persecution, enforced silence and house arrest, and—if the slaying enemy in Burma are any indication—will probably soon succeed in overthrowing it as well.

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But in the final, she does have to put a ribbon in tearful purpose, compelling us to ask not just when to tolerate lessons this has not learn from us today but how far we are still removed from

a country like Burma. Look at our own countries and what you'll see is not a contrast, it is a strong resemblance. Almost point to point, the Burmese foreign minister might have had a brief visit the Philippine representatives had for basis there.

First Suu Kyi? The foreign minister might have said: "Why don't you free Ariel Querubin at al. first?" Suu Kyi's crime is demanding an end to a military junta, one that rules without a mandate from the people. Querubin's act of crime is demanding the end to a civilian junta that has not been elected by the people. Accusations by bullet is no less than a coup wrought by bullet. Both are illegitimate.

The Burmese junta cracks down on peaceful demonstrations to restore democracy. The Philippine regime ministers might have said: "Your crackdown on peaceful demonstrations is wrong." I say we forget, until the Supreme Court adjudged it a couple of years ago, we had a declaration of martial law. "Calibrated preemptive response," which allowed the police to blindgrope the heads of demonstrators, along with their other favorite lore for bedding any public affront, civilian or military, from snuffing that Gloria stole the vote. In this era, Asian laws on either side of the issue are the same.

Stop the killings in Burma? Ah, but there the Burmese foreign minister might have had a field day. Well, you're not to marvel in the gall of someone who can say she will not abide human rights violations when her own hands are country-second only to Iraq as the deadliest place for journalists—never mind that the media she has country the most corrupt in Asia. A country that the journalism and human rights organizations of the world have attached a warning sign to. It is the case, she says: "In a regime or society at your can risk. A culture of impunity reigns here."

Right now, I'm wondering when Cory will come out in a op-ed or global forum to make a call, one that will only resound across the world. For Suu Kyi to be freed. And, maybe, add a thing or two about freeing the country we from the clutches of a Burmese-type regime.

Cory sought to convince Abalos to do a Chavit?

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

IN THE INAUGURATION OF CONSUELO CUISIA HERNANDEZ as chairman of Commission on Elections Thursday, Benjamin Abalos of this and that was long overdue.

Long before last week's decision, named upon the robbing of the computerization contract by no less than Joey de Venecia, Abalos was already technically ousted by scrutiny of the entire Board of Commissioners of the Comelec, starting with the chairman. Those calls for their resignation were as personal vendettas against Abalos, but they did get more for their impeachment were intensified. It is expected, with no politicians willing to meet the public's ire in close to an election.

Abalos, however, refused to give in to current media demands—he can't say no to the first chance he had against those involved in the anomalous computerized contract, the now-gold-bath contract of the Venecias, and the rest of the "Arthur" villains"—and chose that what their wives ordered a virtue committed, nobody was responsible for it.

The conduct and manning of home of the May 2007 elections only added more fodder to the people's perception that the Comelec had to go. Of all the men, was fed up in the task of returning them, not to say incredulity in the public. The prolonged canvassing of votes, especially of the mid-ranker contested national offices, and the failure of the automated election system to produce the promised speedy results only fed the public's disgust with the Comelec.

And yet, despite the obvious failings of the Supreme Court stayed mounting criticism about his appointment of Abalos to the Comelec, he stood his ground tough, and overlooked fully expected rules to roll out the tanks until his resignation.

So what is it about this 2/3 nominee and his role in the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Chavit supplier that spooked Abalos enough to summon him to hasten his overdue resignation?

* * *

WELL, Abalos in his statement said the Senate hearings and the frenzied media coverage of the controversy around her talent a toll on him and his family, and he no longer wanted to subject his wife and children to any more distress, especially in the case of his youngest daughter Samantha.

Certainly, Abalos is vulnerable. But true to the

Reborn

WELL WELCOME!... "COUNTRY ROADS TOO"... whatever rainy days... and more to know!

Before all closes, I had been restless for weeks, and I could not "contain" myself and my senses.

It am a film Dude—I cannot live without watching movies within a week; I am guilty of being a "shopaholic"—I always decide to wear the same wedding even anniversary; I have

an "in-house" tongue which can [illegible] or not [illegible] with touch of tennis and swimmer), and, I always crave for something fancy)

YOUNG BLOOD

Ryan Kerwin M. Velasco

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the [illegible] and below... full...

I'm an effort to get fond of myself, I decided to try that I [illegible] and ended up in a shopping mall. I watched a movie with my sister, went shopping like we regularly do, and ate at a trendy upstreet restaurant—but to be small. It was one of those rare occasions when I had more relative time. My senses were complaining. My eyes were telling me I was to worn-out this week my tongue seemed to have lost its taste.

I was just on body that my sister decided to spend her weekend in Ilocos, and she took me and our younger brother along.

Wild traveling

The wandering site is an open bus included plans. We won't drive it's a interesting are one of you "merge" with it. It's all fun—and school drive from Baua, Ilocos Sur.

On the way, we were already feeling the fatigue of the nine-hour travel from Manila by land. As we stopped on the shore of Sand Beach in Pagudpud, we heard our "opponent" howling, letting out a signal every minute, telling us to begin the hunt.

Only a few dares to venture in serious and take part. The talent frantically trailed while the day "marched." We were immediately ready to combat.

In our "corner"—mothers—were the jumpy visitors in trunks and swimsuits. In the other—offshore—were the mighty waves. He jumped into the giant waves seven to twelve feet high. The waves pushed us back to the shore, which dropped us like the sun and landed us back again into the chaos. We were smashed down. Five rounds won.

Second round. He gathered our strength for another wrestling with the powerful waves. But we were knocked down. We are raised by waves and trampled on on the shore where every day left us lying and breathing heavily. We stayed for one and finished "above, more waves." And we also playfully critiqued, smiling as more waves as the wind grew stronger and the waves wilder.

It was a three hour, action packed bout. We enjoyed the match and I'm pretty sure the unbeatable sun and the opponent why had a solid date next! The scenes had finally reached the top.

Canoeing weekend

The ride (sidelines being in Pagudpud. Breaking and swimming are not the only our challenge. It's canoeing—canoeing which the sea waves, that is.

"Country weekend"

The weeding gave us a lot of laughter and restored our battered bodies with a good night's sleep at the house of my cousin in Baua. We had to wake the night at the edge of an abundant farm in Baua. The following morning, we were up to another surprise—a majestic rendezvous by an "countryweekenders." The scenes began with an "aliack," and the quick winds swayed the trees in "tic" and "tick, even as the leaves rustled. And there we heard the cocks roar, the dogs bark and the pests "mooh-oh," adding to the symphony the birds chirped and sun mirrored for a sunny morning.

An a person who usually wakes up praising for the sun, to see traces of city living, this was a marvelous or elevate performance in the city, it's very rare that we hear a musical composition by nature.

Warm-baby days

The afternoon was very hot, so we are enough to go to the lilies. The "papasita" and "climenberg in palm" easily overpowered by the cool weather, especially that it was mixed with the Ilocanos' famous warmth.

But a special meal would be incomplete without the famed Ilocos longanisa, bagnet and empanada.

The longanisa is crispy on the outside and juicy inside. I used to wonder why "bagnet" is among the most popular here in my Ilocos region. I discovered its excellent crunchiness, not like that of the "chicharon's," which is too crunchy even for a "broken knees." Whoda, the "bagnet crunch" is between the chicharon's and broken knees's.

It was the best empanada that I ever tasted with its delicious mix of fried egg, ground beef and pork, papaya cubes, food, it is black flavor vinegar, it's perfect!

For dessert, you don't want to miss the "special inking ice." It's as if some "magic formula" is being used to perfect ice sweetness.

Beautiful Sunset

I thought that the "weekend" with the sea waves and the yummy cuisines were all I have was to Ilocos.

In Currimao, a 30 minutes drive from Baua, there was a wide stretch of white and granish coral formations that opened as a magnificent view of the clean and clear sea. As we were traveling to Vigan, we were called to a memorable image all lush and vibrant. More than an hour later we'll go, it was still with us—a very relaxing, very rejuvenating sight.

Before gone me back my senses. I feel refreshed, restored and even relaxed!

Ryan Kerwin M. Velasco, 23, is a freelance writer and reporter.

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Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, and send your parent's consent as an if employed, the parents aren't holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

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Abalos steps out of the picture

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE BEST THAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT THE RESignation yesterday of Commission on Elections chairman Benjamin Abalos is that it was long overdue.

Long before last week's decision, named upon the robbing of the computerization contract by no less than Joey de Venecia, Abalos was already technically ousted by scrutiny of the entire Board of Commissioners of the Comelec, starting with the chairman. Those calls for their resignation were as personal vendettas against Abalos, but they did get more for their impeachment were intensified. It is expected, with no politicians willing to meet the public's ire in close to an election.

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So what is it about this 2/3 nominee and his role in the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Chavit supplier that spooked Abalos enough to summon him to hasten his overdue resignation?

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WELL, Abalos in his statement said the Senate hearings and the frenzied media coverage of the controversy around her talent a toll on him and his family, and he no longer wanted to subject his wife and children to any more distress, especially in the case of his youngest daughter Samantha.

Certainly, Abalos is vulnerable. But true to the

proposed broadband project, despite his protestations of innocence, he remained the chairman and head of a constitutional body, he had no business meddling in a transaction between a government department and a foreign supplier. And the testimonies of two witnesses, Mike Arroyo and Commissioner on Higher Education Cheloy Garilao Romulo-Velez—that he had despite billion or commissioner before them, put him in extra-marital hole.

Cristina Gloria suggested that my impeachment attempt would not progress simply because the House was too many scared about me many elected officials. But perhaps there's also the extra-marital hole, provided again to every one of them to stand. It smacks of a most political solution to a messy political tangle. An impeachment complaint would have placed the forces of President Macapagal-Arroyo (who must remember Benjamin Abalos) against the self-formidable forces of Speaker Jose de Venecia. The only question remaining is what rewards were offered the former Comelec chair for his silence. Will he keep one of the prizes and heading till a friendly confirmation.

The Black and White Movement, (though spokesperson Leah Navarro insisted otherwise) in which is expressed "our hope that Abalos' resignation "paves the way for genuine electoral reform." The movement also said that it would insist on a "withdrawal of [all] endorsements" and a consequences and sanctions of television.

* * *

TRAFFIC along the South Expressway promised my stretching the South Installing last Sept. 26 of "Nanong A Love Affair with God and Country" by Manny Lim Antonio Santiago. The movie was held

NEWSSTAND

John Nery

Senators economist Pantaleon Diokno of the late economist Cielito Habito in giving a lecture at the Asian Development Bank seminar, as part of the ADB's Distinguished Speakers series. He has, for the last decade or so, advocated the view that neither great domestic problem nor the Human Development Index provide an accurate measure of development. An interesting stuff, but Diokno economists I am more interested in his work. Almost as soon as he arrives at the country—and how it may apply to the Philippines. Habito, a veteran Asian hand, recently offers the people's will.

* * *

In a dinner with members the other night, the way the senators conducted themselves during the hearings was quite naturally the rewarding topic of conversations. Sen. Loren Legarda was singled out for praise, for asking valid, reasoned questions and not indulging in grandstanding. She focus was also cited, for his observance with mathematics and concepts.

I must confess, though, to a certain sense being disappointed in the performance of the senators. It seems to have done his homework. Of all the senators present (the blue ribbon alone has 17 members), he alone seems to have the consistent knowledge of the bill. Kumar mantra, "consistent and weak." Diokno complied? There's an alternative prayer. Just about an hour after he emailed with Ambassador Rosemary Lajeunesse Bernabe, on the government's evaluation of the savings it will realize from the ZTE deal, he sent me a message complete with his quotes, was already in my e-mail inbox—and in dozens of other journalists' inboxes too. The data management (5.09 pesos)

is the White Cross compound, a children's home which started out as a shelter for children whose parents were incarcerated during the Marcos years. It offers residential care and temporary shelter for abandoned children as well as day care services.

Though at home's lovely children, or as the resident director, Fr. Benigno Beltran, OSA, describes them, "a mix of juvenile delinquents, neglected, wards, battered, parents and family," the short hope of "homes" completing it into a functional society of the person from the 1990s to the late 1990s, except for the period between 1972 and the betrayal of the Philippine revolution by its leaders as well as by the new tyrannists, this home has, the oldest of World War II and the early years of Philippine independence.

Telling the story of her wealthy and philanthropic dad, the theatrical as well as the Lopezes and Ayalas on her mother side, Antonio Santiago says the time of the grandfather Gregorio Araneta, her husband, as well as her mother Pilocito who founded White Cross both several friends in 1937, to discuss as well issues ranging from tuberculosis, leprosy, polio to economical, and rural development initiatives.

* * *

THE TEST is complemented as well by more than 300 photos, among them the first to Araneta's wife, Pilocito, and the children, including the ones destroyed during the WW, and portraits of Manila's renowned beauties, among them Divina Belmonte Valdes, Flecita "Nenay" Lopez, Estrellita Araneta, Angelita Gaston, Mary Alcuaz Mozella, Isabelita de los Reyes Barrera and Victoria Araneta.

For those interested in architecture, in interior decoration, the book is also made by the White Cross building with a floor-done by Italian sculptor, Francisco Monti. The Art Deco building was designed by National Artist Juan Nakpil and completed in 1938.

There are portraits as well of "Nicanora," the home of Salvador and Victoria Araneta, which was designed by three architects: Juan Arellano, Bernardo Servino and Andres Luna Saavedra.

Postcards from the rest of the book will go to the repair and reconstruction of White Cross.

With his investment banking background, Recto also knows enough to debate, not only economic policy, but the theoretical framework or philosophical assumptions informing a given policy. Witness the debate between Recto and whether Roumulo should be included in the project evaluation. Pilora was the last time a senator brought Keynesian (the economist John Maynard) into a discussion of amendments to legislative discussion!

* * *

But it is precisely those befitting observations into Recto's "The senate's difficulties because it is designed to educate reality") and first ("Pilora that is a recurring substance") that give me pause.

Like many others reading the hearings, I shared Brian Tumacder with the statement of the senator's interest. Recto, for example, first senator to use only once being evasive. Fantastic lines. Transpotation Secretary Leandro Mendoza, was evasive in ambiguity. Abalos, true to form, was stubborn personified. Virtuoso performance by Commissioner Velez.

Indeed, after Recto urged Pantaleon off the line on first, he faced Mendoza and said: "And now I want to Secretary Mendoza, whom I always give extra slack—and I'm not being sarcastic in the Cadiz's for weeks on that matter offered.

I am reminded of Jesus Raul Pangalangan's article the other week, where he spoke of a "class divide" [in the Philippines] between the "Ateneo de Cheibus Dumpios, me the Ateneo Matriculars. With his awareness of literature and Alaska Quirk was aware of power in the various administrations, Senator Lacson—and Senator Lacson—didn't even had set only [illegible] as those notices.

* * *

The Christian Family Movement (http://www.cfmonline.com)—[illegible] is holding its 29th national convention at the Eco-Tech Center in Lahug, Cebu City from October 26 to 28. A seminar-type session precedes the convention, from October, although convention on "Understanding Psychological Development," that starts on October 4th, a one-day of the dates.

* * *

Email: nery@inquirer.com.ph

Polls afford barangays a space to break away from trapo hold

SAG KARTERAN PARTY (SAGP) IS calling on all barangay members to know, understand and actively participate in reforming the direction and manner of governing their community for the common good.

Sec. 384 of the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA No. 7160), which took effect on Jan. 1, 1992, provides: "Role of the Barangay—As a basic political unit, the barangay serves as the primary unit of government policy, plans, programs, projects and activities in the community and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, considered and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled." The barangay, the smallest political unit of government, has in ever territory, resources and governments; and its own three branches of government, the executive, legislative and judicial.

Although the very noble intention of Sec. 385 of the Local Government Code, most barangays in our country have fallen under the control of traditional politicians who only promote their personal interests. This is despite the provision under Sec. 38, Article II, of the Omnibus Election Code, which states that no political party, organization or group shall intervene in the nomination and election of any barangay candidate.

It is very sad to note that the marginalized members of our barangays are kept unaware of the role of the barangay, so that they are easier to manipulate, especially during local and national elections.

Our barangays receive substantial funding. In 2006, the total share of the barangays just from the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) amounted to P16 billion. Aside from this, the barangays are also entitled to 20 percent of real property taxes, 35 percent of tourist receipts, earnings (e.g., fees), 50 percent of community tax (cedula or residence certificate) and 100 percent of fees, documentary stamps, etc. generated from within their respective territories. But majority of barangay members are kept in the dark about how much funds are received by their barangay and how they are spent. They need to be informed and understand that they are legally empowered to get involved in running the affairs of their barangay.

For the upcoming October barangay elections, let us all actively participate and vote in accordance with our conscience to stop the continuation of the poor and the oppression of the weak. As barangay members, let us choose only candidates who are accountable, transparent, well-informed, independent-minded and who possess good governance. Only then can our barangays eventually function independently and effectively as the primary unit of government in the democratic system where the collective views of the people are freely expressed and considered.

We have to remove the control of traditional politicians over barangays before we can start reforming the culture of graft and corruption to eventually solve the problem of poverty in our country.

—RENATO B. PUNONGBAYAN,
president,
Sag-Capalcuan Party (SAGP),
angkapunopary@yahoo.com

LETTERS

SEN. Miriam Defensor-Santiago at the September 26 hearing

Miriam on September 26 incident: 'Twas no walkout

WE THINK THE business FOR the kind mention of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago in its September 27 editorial.

We wish to clarify, however, that Senator Santiago did not walk out of the September 26 Senate inquiry on the ZTE-NBN agreement. She left right after speaking in the hearing, because she wanted to rest. She is suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome, and thus cannot last for the whole hearing.

The senator has also formally recommended to Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano that the Senate blue ribbon committee endorse the case to the Ombudsman for preliminary investigation of the parties suspected of bribery and corruption.

—JANICE RAZON,
public affairs,
Office of Sen. Miriam
Defensor-Santiago

Suspended RP-China agriculture deal: simple but scary

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY ARTHUR Yap's decision to suspend the RP-China agreements that will initiate the lease of more than a million hectares of agricultural land for use in corn and should be placed under serious scrutiny. (EDITORIAL, 9/25/07)

First of all, Yap could as genuinely as he can have come out to consult the stakeholders. If public consultation was so important to him, then he should have disclosed the contents of the agreements during the negotiation stage. This is what he is mandated by the Constitution to do, nothing less, three days after withholding the contents of the agreements, he even misrepresented state your nature as one ruling that "government contracts" even when by behest of the signatory on behalf of the Department of Agriculture.

Second, government officials who have entered into anomalous and unconstitutional contracts should not be allowed to escape liability since they usurped the assistance when they are backed once a former or when the public agency succumbs to their influence and pressure. Under Chapter 3 Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement) and ITT) available to the spotlight, it appears that it is time becoming a habit of our negotiators to broker anomalous deals in hopes of "getting away with it," even as they are ready to back off from such deals when they can't stand the heat.

Third, there should be some clarity as to what Secretary Yap means by "suspension." Does that the agreement involving the lease of 1 million hectares of land) with Yu Fong Corporation has already been signed, thus giving rise to legal obligations, not to mention diplomatic implications, to the agreement merely on the backburner, ready to be dusted off when public interest shall have died down? Who decides that the considerations with stakeholders are already enough?

Lastly, for minute the point altogether. The agreement is flawed not only in its substance but also in the manner of its negotiation. Is it because both the stakeholders or because a lucrative transactional commercial deal? Are owners is gripped by a kind of cynicism which a most insidious because it says it the system is rigged, I don't have to take responsibility.

People's anger whenever they want, thieves take whatever they want, authorities take whatever they want for the simple reason that they can get away with it.

I really don't know how, but perhaps we can start by taking time to reflect and take responsibility for our actions.

—FELIMON TAN CHOCO,
felimonchoco@yahoo.com

RP can break out of cynicism cycle

THIS IS A REJECTION TO CORINA de los Quinos' September 24 column. The frustration dripping from the words of his column "Pinoles and weeds." is understandable. Our country is gripped by a kind of cynicism which a most insidious because it says it the system is rigged, I don't have to take responsibility.

People's anger whenever they want, thieves take whatever they want, authorities take whatever they want for the simple reason that they can get away with it.

I really don't know how, but perhaps we can start by taking time to reflect and take responsibility for our actions.

—FELIMON TAN CHOCO,
felimonchoco@yahoo.com

A democracy with 'untouchables'?

I QUOTE FROM THE INQUIRER editorial "Turning Point" (9/25/07): "Are will have to take our time and wait for a president sure to be Gloria-against-him."

Really, are we that helpless to the likes of Benjamin Abalos, Virgilio Garcillano, Jose Pidal, etc.?

In almost all the irregularities in Garcillano, these people, especially Jose Pidal, are involved. And yet they continue to roam on the public stage notwithstanding the howls and boos. Talk about impunity and total absence of dignified! No these people truly think that a powerful than our own Congress, or the Senate, and the Supreme Court can do something to stop them?

What will happen now to the institutions they're destroying? Is our democracy really dead, finished?

—JUAN PAULO ESPALLARDO,
pepe0768@yahoo.com.ph

Impeachments hostage to 'jueteng'

HOPEFULLY, THE HOUSE of Representatives has made consensus, morality and shame and, even its looking at impeachment complaints as nothing for a last-hero game.

Ah, the irrefutable influence of jueteng!

—GEORGE ALEL,
aurora_ed@yahoo.com
903 Eligh St., Bonifacio Homes,
QC 19366

We need real education projects, not initiatives of dubious value

THE BUDGET FOR THE CURRENT education project (EDP) should be better spent on upgrading the country's dismal public education system.

Eighty-six percent of the DEP allocation would come from a P20.771 billion loan from China, the remaining 14 percent, or P3.71 billion, would come from the Philippine government. But given the dismal state of the country's basic education system, the DEP is unnecessary and would only overwhelm the country already dire debt situation.

The Department of Education estimates that by the end of school year 2008, there would be a shortage of 5,306 classrooms, 69,139 school seats and 2,755 teachers, which would be left unborn due to lack of funds. The DepEd placed the cost of bridging these "resource gaps" at P1.3 billion, which could easily be covered just by the government's construction budget for the DEP. There is a further shortage of 44.1 million textbooks, which would cost some P2.8 billion to bridge.

The DEP would only worsen the country's foreign debt situation. As of mid-June 2007, the national government's total debt stock to a staggering P3.79 trillion, which means that every 91 Filipino men, women or teen PHLOAN.

Government now spends more for the servicing of loans for payments alone (on the country's debts) than it does for education, health and social services combined. In fact, in the 2006 budget, government allocated P120.68 per capita for education, while it allocated only P2,018.36 per capita for education.

Government can do more to improve basic education by increasing education for education in the national budget, hiring more teachers and bringing measure gaps in the sector than by investing in projects of questionable value.

—JENNIFER BEL SOLAMO-BAUTISTA,
RAGINDO,
general secretary,
Educators' Forum
for Development (EFD),
124 Timog Ave.,
Quezon City 1103

Box too big

JUSTICE CONSUELO YNARES-Santiago denies having received money in eight box. ("No to box-time 19/08 Tribe," Inquirer, 9/25/07)

That gets me tapped. Imagine

'Thank God ...

From page A1

ing scandals, had he loved using marijuana to do so.

"If you have a basket of transactions and you find one treasonous act, we still can't throw away the entire basket," Abalos asked, during a press conference at the height of the "Hello Garci" controversy surrounding scandal in July 2005.

Garci to blame

"If there is a rat in your house, would you burn down the entire house just to get rid of it?" he said in another interview.

Abalos always maintained that former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano acted alone in concert with unnamed accomplices found in the 2004 presidential election.

He later blamed Garcillano "for all this mess."

In one instance, Abalos defended Garcillano's supposed discussion accused by Senate investigator witnesses Randee Gaw and Midsayap Mayor Jose Calderon of rounding up the Comelec printers and the ballots each bore a suspected "jacking" batch with supposedly extra votes for President Arroyo before the 2004 elections.

The "Hello Garci" wiretapping affair was to become the most enduring scandal to plague the Comelec—and the Arroyo administration.

Another scandal that sent a dark shadow over Abalos concerned offers to canvass the polls.

Mega Pacific deal

The Supreme Court voided Comelec's decision to award a P1.3-billion automation contract to Mega Pacific. A Senate report also implicated Comelec officials in the deal.

In October last year, the Ombudsman cleared him and other commissioners of all charges, citing lack of evidence.

The 1,000-thousand-meeting tradition—ordered retained by the Supreme Court but which Mega Pacific refused to accept—are still around, retained, in the Comelec's resolutions in May 2007.

The scandals plaguing the electoral process led Mr Arroyo to appoint former Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr as presidential adviser on electoral reforms in early 2006.

Davide reportedly recommended the resignation of Abalos and other commissioners tainted by the scandals. Davide was later appointed ambassador to the United Nations.

A new poll modernization law, the Automated Election System law, was passed in December 2001 but Abalos and his Comelec could not implement the automation for lack of time.

Suspicious signatures

In March 2006, Abalos again drew flak when the Comelec gave local election registrars the go-ahead to verify the signatures for a people's initiative to amend the Charter that was filed by the Sigaw ng Bayan coalition and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines.

The Comelec was accused of conniving with Malacañang to nullify the initiative process. The petition called for a shift to a parliamentary government.

The Supreme Court later junked the Malacañang-backed initiative petition, adding the process is "constitutionally infirm" and saying the 6.3 million signatures supporting it were "deceptively gathered."

Cause-oriented groups and political parties have long sought justice for Comelec, starting with Abalos' resignation.

Rebuilding a disrupted transition starts with installing leadership that can win high credibility," said lawyer Jose Recidoro of the Philippine Democratic Strengthening Principles in April 2006.

Abalos said he was familiar with the "dirty faces of cheating" because he himself was a veteran of cheating. In 1986, Abalos tried for vice mayor of Mandaluyong but lost by 17 votes; he also lost a mayoralty in 1998.

He claimed the elections were riddled with fraud.

As politician

Abalos was appointed officer in charge of Mandaluyong in 1996 and was later elected mayor two years later.

From 1998, he ran Mandaluyong for the next 11 years, after which he was appointed chair of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Abalos claimed his last degree from Manuel L. Quezon University in 1967. He supported his college education by working as factory worker, messenger, janitor and a caddy at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club.

Decades later, he was elected president of the exclusive club.

Inky Abola, secretary general of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel), described the controversies that bounded Abalos as "a season of scandals."

Patricio Guiyab, executive director of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (IPER), said that "Hello Garci" "probably the biggest scandal of them."

"He was mentioned in the tapes but he was able to dodge it," Lim. Jr. said.

If the truth about the tapes were unearthed, Guiyab claimed, Abalos would most likely be in the thick of the controversy as much as Garcillano was.

Before all these scandals, Guiyab claimed, Abalos had been linked to "smaller" controversies, such as the overspending that supposedly allowed when he secured his Comelec post in 2002.

Among these scandals, Guiyab said, were the ones cases that Abalos allowed to be issued to the commissioners and the salary increase he authorized for the Comelec employees.

"There was no immediate need for the new cars," Guiyab said.

Maguindanao issue

In the May midterm elections, Abalos faced more controversies involving Maguindanao election supervisor Lintang Bedol and the scandal-tainted Maguindanao election returns.

The Comelec under his watch was also heavily criticized for allowing a practically unknown Joselito Bejim Cigarras to run for senator under the Bilanggo Bagong Lipunan (BBL) ticket.

Then Taguig Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano accused his enemies in the administration of "side-stabbing" his namesake to derail his candidacy. The congressman was eventually elected senator.

The pinch for the sake request, a scheme allegedly carried out by Malacañang operatives, to influence the Comelec members, also hit the Comelec.

In the run up to the May elections.

But Abalos hardly flinched at the exposés. He only said anti-graft should be formally filed before the Comelec.

Abalos also defended the nominations of his aide Jacobe—a medical doctor by profession—as a party-list group of Filipino drivers.

The older Abalos' party-list group, Bantay Pinoy, won almost nothing among the several organizations that bruised for Multi-sectoral.

Question of manners

The biggest issue that Abalos and the Comelec had to face in the pullout-decision was the controversial Maguindanao vote.

Maguindanao supposedly cast a 11.45-margin for the administration's Team Unity, a result censured by the opposition.

Bedol's name under-done scrutiny especially after he told the Comelec-Tint documents that held the official results were stolen from his office.

Opposition senatorial candidate Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, who trailed the administration's Juan Miguel Zubiri in the vote count, pleaded unsuccessfully for the Maguindanao results to be excluded from the national canvassing.

'Hot soup'

Abalos' sense of propriety was questioned after the Comelec chair was allegedly seen with the parents of Zubiri at an upscale Makati City hotel at the height of the vote-count controversy.

Abalos later said he went to the hotel because he wanted to take some "hot soup" but had bumped into Zubiri's mother at the hotel.

Abalos said that good manners prompted him to greet the Zubiri couple.

Naturally, this is said Abalos' assignment will left questions hanging.

"It is just for his self-preservation or left to protect whatever he's done in the past or is he really out to help the people?" asked Ricardo T. Bonoan

Gov't tells high court ZTE ...

From page A1

The DOJ also sought the dismissal of the petitions of Bobi Van Gan Sales Supilco as nullity the deal and that of being NBN proponent Amoretum Holdings Inc. and Global Telecom as a non-party remaining under on the deal.

The government lawyer claimed that Supilco and ASI had no legal standing in file the pleading because they failed to show the project's direct injury to ZTE.

Among the respondents in the petitions are the National Economic and Development Authority and the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC).

The ZTE deal has been the subject of a Senate and House investigation.

Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Jr. has been accused of brokering the deal between the DOTC and ZTE to supply the NBN project.

Abalos has also been accused of offering a bribe to Romulo Neri, former Neda secretary general, as he would endorse the ZTE proposal.

Hearts and minds

"In the battle for the hearts and minds of the public, propagandists often embellish their arguments with adornos and fabricated claims to suit their theses, particularly Inquirer Ina Silabocanik are not," the OSG said.

"A case in point is the much maligned National Broadband Network project of the government. Local media goes around for condemning here out helped around the myth but rather backchoked it," the OSG said in to 111 page comment filed early Friday evening.

ZTE's loan-funded proposal is "more advantageous" to the country, compared with the proposals of ASI and Ch Eon Asiontis, and would save the government some P1 billion as, usually according to the OSG.

The NBN project seeks to put up a high-capacity telecommunications network to link government national agencies and local government units nationwide.

Misleading

The OSG also described as "misleading" the contentions that the NBN project would put the government into debt when it chose Amoretum a project to be undertaken by ASI at no cost to the government.

"For clarification, there was never such free offer in the first place—not from petitioner ASI, nor from anybody else. The government would end up paying more to the loan and the equipping costs even to the high by touted ASI proposal, which uses untidy numbers like 'at no government expense,'" it said.

The OSG pointed out that the government was speculating about P4 billion yearly for the services of private telecommunication carriers, but was expected to spend about P2 billion yearly for the network to be provided by ZTE.

Cheapest

The OSG also said that ZTE's proposal was the cheapest when its overall project cost was compared with what the others had promised to deliver. The ZTE proposal would also provide more equipment and better technology.

Under ZTE's proposal, the Philippines would get 300 backbone stations, 200 base stations and nearly 20,000 customer equipment like terminals, telephone and modems, among others, the OSG said.

The P3.65-billion and P181 million proposals of ASI and Amoretum, respectively, promise less than 200 base stations and equipment, it noted.

"The foregoing demonstrates not only the cost effectiveness of ZTE's proposal but also the technical superiority thereof when pitted against the two others," it said.

ZTE's offer was also in line with the government's objectives of constructing and operating its own national telecommunications network for the information and communication technology requirements of its agencies, according to the OSG.

Cellular network for public

It said ASI's proposal intends to create a privately owned broadband and cellular network to provide cellular phone services to the general public, but with the government as the main subscriber.

Amoretum wanted in put up a satellite-based network to connect the Department of Interior and Local Government and selected least government units, according to the OSG.

In terms of look inward, the Chinese firm is also a recognized player and is the largest telecom company listed on the Shenzhen and Hong Kong stock exchanges, the OSG pointed out.

In comparison, ASI is a holding company with no experience in telecommunications and no technology partners. Amoretum also has no track record in telecom integration.

The DOJ also criticized ASI, saying it did not specify how it would finance its proposal.

"Worse, it has by its paid up capital a paltry ... P12,000.00 as per SEC records," the DOJ said, referring to General Information Sheet filed in 2005, the very same amount reflected in its Treasurer's Affidavit filed in 2003 with the Securities and Exchange Commission. With these in mind, how then could petitioner ASI offer itself as financially favorable consideration?" the DOJ said.

No specified interest

Amoretum's proposed would be covered by a 10.5-percent loan payable over 15 years at no specified interest rate, it noted. ZTE's proposal, covered by the $500-million soft loan from China, would be payable in 20 years with a five-year grace period.

The OSG said ZTE was chosen for the NBN project because the Chinese government maintained the company's consideration of the loan it would extend to the Philippines.

The OSG said that China would fund the NBN project on a "bid loan" and that the features of the Government Procurement Reform Act were applied, the validity of loans extended on condition that the beneficiary would get supplies and services from the lender country.

As for the President Macapagal-Arroyo's statement that the broadband project would push through only at no cost to the government, the OSG said subsequent Cabinet meetings favoring the deal and a plethora undertaking was not feasible.

A chance to reform Comelec

From page A1

an open process."

Last month the resources gave Malacañang a chance to appoint seven officials that were "competent, with probity and credibility."

He said Abalos' resignation was also beneficial in that it opened Congress from a controversial Magindanao vote.

Magindanao supposedly cast a 11.45-margin for the administration's Team Unity, a result censured by the opposition.

Bedol's name under-done scrutiny especially after he told the Comelec-Tint documents that held the official results were stolen from his office.

Opposition senatorial candidate Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, who trailed the administration's Juan Miguel Zubiri in the vote count, pleaded unsuccessfully for the Magindanao results to be excluded from the national canvassing.

"With his resignation, we can now proceed to conduct clean and credible elections," he Villa said.

He said "now is a good time" for President Macapagal-Arroyo to appoint "competent and men of unstrained integrity and proven records of competence" to the Comelec.

Need for reforms

Two election commissioners, Resurreccion Borra and Florentino Tuason Jr., are set to retire in February next year. Abalos himself was supposed to retire in February making his six-year term.

Election lawyer Golla de Lima counted a number of votes, saying that any reforms in the Comelec following Abalos' resignation "will depend on the new chairman."

Election Commissioner Rene Sarmiento hoped that with Abalos' resignation, the Comelec would no longer be linked to the controversial National Broadband Network (NBN) project involving Chinese telecoms giant ZTE Corp.

"We can now focus our attention on preparing matters such as election reforms," Sarmiento said.

The Comelec's immediate concern is this month's barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan polls.

COC picket today

Comelec spokesperson Jaenee Jimenez said the commission en banc would meet today to elect an officer in charge, who is expected to be Borra, the most senior commissioner.

Sarmiento said Mr Arroyo should not appoint a new Comelec chair until after Abalos' term expires in February.

If a replacement is immediately named, that person would only serve Abalos' unexpired term and yet receive all the retirement benefits, Sarmiento said.

"Someone wants ang taong bayan (the people)," he said.

Butt of jokes

Sarmiento said he and the other Comelec officers had not been ousted from the effects of the ZTE controversy.

"The close relationship (Gen. Hermilando) told me they were being asked about it and we became the butt of jokes because of the issue," he said.

"Ito pa rin ang mga (They are still) saying (Abalos) himself has the resignation. The Comelec has been losing credibility from way way back," said Eric Alva, secretary general of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel).

Committee Opposition's Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, who lost to administration candidate Juan Miguel Zubiri in their battle for the 12th senatorial slot in May's hotly contested election, said the resignation "has awoken."

"I don't think, from the first instance that he was appointed, that he was qualified for the job because of his lack of objectivity," Pimentel said.

ZTE controversy

To Pimentel, "it all boils down to integrity."

He said that Abalos' has agonized him "in a long story" that began with his bungling for his father, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., to the graft case over the Mega Pacific computer deal he filed against the Comelec chair.

The Makati Business Club that Lim represented had been calling for Abalos to resign as well as for the government to rescind its contract with the ZTE Corp. following allegations of bribery and irregularities in the deal.

"Unbelievably, merely suspended the ZTE deal despite calling all the controversies and scandals since it should have been scrapped," Lim said. "We hope that the truth finally comes out."

Now up to the courts

In a separate interview, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry chair Oscar G. Dee said Abalos' resignation exposed the latter to prosecution in the courts.

"This is good in the sense that this allows for the legal process to to be followed as was the experience with former President Joseph Estrada's plunder case," Dee said.

"Whatever must be done should be done according to due process," he said.—with a report from Leila B. Salaverria

Traders say NBN probe is No. 1 'teleserye'

From page A1

Cory's controversial broadband deal with the government is running out to be star of the country's most watched "telenovela," a senior stock market official said.

"We just see different chemistry and the Senate is the biggest circus in town right now. The market has desensitized that already," said a local broker, who spoke to the Inquirer.

The stock market is no serious threat right now to political drama, the broker said. "What's more important is how the economy is doing and that the opposition remains. In my stocks in the market brought about by any new interest rates."

Other stock analysts said the foreign exchange and stock markets were numb in the ongoing Senate investigation. If the Senate or the President is not held liable for the multimillion-dollar deal, the probe just remains a big source of entertainment, they said.

"I think the ZTE problem is isolated as long as it doesn't threaten the position of [Mrs Arroyo]. People are just watching the whole thing entertaining," another official of a local brokerage firm said.

Market focus

Nan Rodriguez, head of research at Enterprise Securities, said Filipinos were not taking the ZTE controversy seriously.

"The markets are focused on the US economy and rebellion has more investment impact. It will be sustainable, politics has been downplayed," he said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange main index yesterday finished higher by 25.82 points, or 0.7 percent, to 3,549.92, but the market moved weeks and less than the Bangko Sentral may cut interest rates at Thursday's Monetary Board meeting by 25 basis points, analysts said.

Positive signal

Atty. Ed Castillo, managing director for the investment firm First Grade Holdings Inc., said the resignation of Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos yesterday could be taken as a positive signal by the stock market.

"We applaud his move because it dissipates the political noise dragging the administration. It's like he [Mr Arroyo] is to appoint a more credible person in the post who is committed to electoral reforms," Del Castillo said.

Abalos' resignation came amid allegations that he bribed the son of Speaker Jose de Venecia to back up of the $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) contract in favor of ZTE.

Del Castillo, however, warned that the business environment might be affected if there was no proper prosecution of parties related to bribery allegations.

Business reaction

"Business is uninflicted. The process is ongoing to investigate the deal. It's not a shock wave to business. But if it is prolonged and it is shown that there is no investigating held after grand and corruption cases are not prosecuted, then the business sector will react negatively," he added.

Del Castillo said he thought that the real issues that president's economic team and part of a public relations plan to soften the images of public figures threatened by the cases.

"It's a public relations maneuver rather than the real attitude of the Filipino people. I think Filipinos are hungry for justice and they'd like to see a level playing field," he said.

Across the NATION

Man stopped from stabbing Panlilio

By Tonnen Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A MAN WHO POLICE DESCRIBED as crazy, on Monday tried to stab Pampanga Gov. Eddie Panlilio with a fan knife while the official was being interviewed by reporters at the lobby of the provincial capitol here.

Panlilio, 51, a Catholic priest, was unhurt as one of his police security aides prevented the attack.

Senior Insp. Ernesto Mamuyac of Intelligence Channel 6, said the man first approached him a few minutes before the interview at about 8:30 a.m.

"How do I seek help. I am from Macabebe. I'm seeking help for my case," Mamuyac quoted the man as saying.

He said the subject had to go to the Hidden Door, which accepts requests for medical assistance.

A foot away

When reporters and cameramen started to gather around Panlilio, Mamuyac said she noticed the man positioning behind the governor.

"He was only one to two feet away from him," Mamuyac said.

"Then he opened his pouch. I saw a pack of cigarettes in it. Then he swung open a fan knife and pointed it in the direction of Atoang Ed. By the time I was trying to shout 'Kong Ino (SPO3 Arno Dimatatac, the governor's security aide), who already grabbed the man's hand and subdued him away," Mamuyac said.

'666'

The ensued a few minutes of commotion at the lobby where some 75 people gathered following Panlilio's launch of his "Ahimsa Campaign," a stumble for good governance and good citizenship.

Security men recalled the governor away briefly from reporters.

Jeffrey Grimm, executive of ABS-CBN Pampanga, confirmed the incident. The footage captured the incident as well.

"During the rubdown, I was wondering why Lolit was so restless and frightened. When I looked behind Atoang Ed, I saw the man holding his knife in the direction of the governor," Grimm said.

He said the man, estimated to be between 35 and 40 years old, wore a red sleeveless shirt and sported a tattoo of "666" on his upper right arm.

Dimatatac said he turned over the man to the police's Special Action Force personnel assigned to the governor, it from of eight SAF men has been securing the governor since June 20 on orders of Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, former chief of the Philippine National Police.

The police in the City of San Fernando released the man after 20 minutes of questioning, according to Supt. Andie Amor, its city police director.

He looked depressed'

"He's known to be crazy," Amor said in explain why his men freed the suspect.

Mamuyac, however, ordered them to again look for the man for further questioning. The suspect is said to be a resident of Barangay San Lazaro, a village just behind the capitol compound.

Panlilio said he did not really see what happened.

Describing the man whom he drew near from a distance, he said: "He also looked depressed."

Tendered a check on his background, I had the desire of the law on illegal possession of deadly weapons and obstruction law for the carrying of deadly weapons," Panlilio told the Inquirer.

Among the people

In public events, Panlilio is known to closely mingle with the people. Many still swear him no priest, forsaking his band in a sign of respect. Others simply shake his friendly priest' him.

His security aides usually watch over him from a distance.

"He has instructed (his guards) not to prevent people who want to approach him," Romano he said, adding this was the first threat on Panlilio's life.

It's towns' duty to keep forests green, says DENR

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—Environment officials have asked officials of the province's 13 towns to assume ownership, political will and execute the task of preserving their communal forests in response to law.

Officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the Benguet Environment and Natural Resources Office (Benro) said the first official obligation is lead the inventory of existing communal forests reaching ownership.

Tribes' role

They said the call by the towns' participation recognized the role of the province's indigenous communities in determining the extent of use of their natural resources.

The environment officials said the devolution provision of the Local Government Code (Republic Act 7160) provided the legal basis for the DENR's decision to transfer some of its functions to cities, towns and provinces.

Explaining the devolved functions, Benro chief Victor Domingo said capitol here recently, hereby Balangod, Benro forester said the role transferred to towns the management and control of communal forests with an area of not more than 50 square kilometers or 5,000 hectares.

Balangod said the management of small watershed areas, which are sources of local water supply, was also devolved.

Towns' duties

He said towns could impose measures to prevent illegal tree cutting and the kaingin system or "slash and burn" agriculture.

He reminded local officials that they should implement the DENR's Bureau for Important Conservation Program (Bilcop) program that required them to conserve and endangered mammals.

Soc Sector Empress welcomed the devolved functions and advised local officials to be ready to file cases against people, businesses and entities violating communal forests.

"They will be expected to (realize) if asked to vacate portions of the forest they have occupied for years," he said.

DENR officials said many timber-based, unregistered participants of the province's forests, as orchard vegetable farms or reforestation.

No record of forests

Manuel Pagtayal, provincial environment natural resources officer, said the DENR has no record of existing communal forests.

But for said commercial vegetable farms, forest fires, erosion and illegal logging have harmed the province's communal forests, watershed parks and watersheds.

Pagtayal cited Atok and the town's successful bid to protect their forests by placing monuments indicating their boundaries after a survey. Reference: Atok, Inquirer Northern Luzon

PLANTING LIFE
A child from the village of Tonkan plants a tree in Pinamilo as part of the "Trees for Life" project. Trees for Life is a joint project of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Green Army to plant 20 million trees across the country between July and November this year.

Passengers, crew of vessel rescued from stormy seas

ROXAS CITY—THE COAST GUARD rescued the passengers and crewmen of a vessel that ran aground Sunday off the town of San Dionisio.

Commander Ronald Jurico, Coast Guard chief in Iloilo, said her craft Mercan Express 1 got stuck on muddy shores at noon (7 a.m. on Sunday, shortly after it left the Iloilo Fort.

Strong winds and big waves forced the vessel to run aground Sunday off the coast of Dumangas, Iloilo and along the Guimaras Strait.

The Coast Guard would have transferred the 49 passengers and 17 crewmen to the BRP Eduardo Ruiz would not do so due to big waves. Two tugboats towed the vessel to the Dumangas Port where it arrived 5 a.m. Sunday.

Several schools in Iloilo City suspended classes in all levels yesterday, amid heavy rains and strong winds triggered by tropical depression in "Mario."

Floods swept major parts of the city since two weeks. The city council declared a state of calamity last Wednesday after 10 to 15 inches or 200 millimeters and more than 2,000 families were displaced by the flood.

In Negros Occidental, floods and strong winds destroyed 45 houses and damaged 163 in the town and one city, provincial social welfare officials said Monday.

Silay Mayor Jose Montelibano and Talisay Mayor Eric Gaston said their cities were also hit on Sunday by blackouts. Reports Reference: Gregorio Bacarro, Inquirer Visayas

Board OKs ₱9 pay hike for Cebu workers

By Jaimee B. Bulanbon
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE REGIONAL wage board agreed on June the eight to implement a minimum wage increase of P9 for Metro Cebu and P8 for other parts of Central Visayas.

Elsie Caymeyog, regional director of the Department of Labor and Employment and board chair, said the new wage order did not provide any exemption to its implementation, although the private sector representative board proposed that the increases take effect in January next year.

"That's the best we can do, because we can give to the labor sector and the management sector to maintain tranquility and harmony. We hope all sectors could understand the board's decision," Caymeyog said.

Exequiel Santiago, labor assistant regional director said the assistant office did not favor the proposal for a January implementation when the board asked if that was legal.

The wage order will take effect 15 days after publication, he said.

Caymeyog said the wages in the academe would be adjusted next school year.

Contractual workers will also benefit from the pay increases, he said.

Veggie towns urged to draw up waste plans

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—Local environment officials have urged the province's vegetable producing towns to draw up solid waste management plans to deal with increased garbage generation, including the 30 to 40 tons of vegetable trimmings, flowers daily there.

The provincial board enacted an environment code but this was not enough to push majority of the towns to come up with their waste disposal programs, according to the Benguet Environment and Natural Resources Office (Benro).

Poor compliance

The Benro on Wednesday said only six of the 13 towns have solid waste management plans—Atok, Bokod, Buguias, La Trinidad, Tublay and Itogon.

The rest—Kibungan, Kapangan, Tuba, Mankayan, Sablan, Bakod and Kabayan—were still planning their waste disposal programs.

Julius Kollin, Benro head, said the plans were still far from complying with the establishment of controlled dumps and sanitary landfills as required by the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (Republic Act 9003).

The law outlaws the closure of all open dump sites for municipalities in 2004.

Kollin said the towns, except La Trinidad, lack equipment of lack of funds to build sanitary landfills.

'Ullulo'

But the province's biggest headache is how to dispose of a daily average of 30 tons of vegetable trimmings, locally known as "ullulo," that come from the vegetable trading post here.

The trimmings come from 1.8 million kilograms of vegetables traded here daily and which farmers are advised to haul back to their tracks going home.

But Atok, Tublay and Buguias officials have complained that farmers often dump their trimmings along roadsides, leaving them in mountains and potential health risks when they begin to decay.

No room

"Let these towns, major producers of potatoes, cabbages and cauliflower, situated along Halsema Highway, the Cordillera's main vegetable trade route to the national port here and in Baguio City.

"Barangay has accumulated dump and a compost facility in Barangay Alno, but it could only accommodate three tons of trimmings.

Gov. Nestor Fongwan urged the mayors of the vegetable producing towns along Halsema Highway to look for areas that could serve as sites for compost facilities in the towns so tourists be encouraged to throw their wastes there.

"Then the cities must not threaten any communal forest, even opinions or watershed," he said. (Reference: Carlito, Inquirer Northern Luzon)

TO KEEP prices low, vegetable dumping takes on the town affects the industry of farmers once farmers begin transferring their produce from the farm to the trading posts of Benguet.

WAVE LENGTH Children enjoy playing in the water amid the ruins of houses that were destroyed by strong waves whipped up by monsoon weather in Barangay Bucana in Davao City

Settlers demand relocation site, funds for trade

TRECE MARTIRES CITY—HUNDREDS OF members of an urban poor group trooped to the Cavite provincial capitol here on Monday to ask for a moratorium on the ongoing demolition of squatter areas in the province.

Members of the Samahan ng Maghahanapbuhay sa Bakuran ng Kahilom (Samaglico) and Samahang Maralita Zero 2000 Zone1 started their 4-km march from Mangguhan Crossing in nearby General Trias town and arrived here at around 10 a.m.

The protesters assailed the provincial government for its alleged failure to ensure the resettlement of the families who would be displaced by the demolition.

"We are just concerned that those who would be displaced by the massive demolition will have nowhere to go as the capitol has not provided them with relocation," said Erlinda Fajardo, Samaglico president.

Cavite Gov. Ismael "Erning" Mathay pressed early last week the leaders of the protesters and assured them of new relocation sites in Dasmariñas and General Trias town.

The governor said the relocation areas were provided by the local government of Dasmariñas and General Trias.

Mathay, however, cautioned that under the Urban Development and Housing Act, the provincial government is required to provide relocation only to residents of structures built before 1992.

He also reminded that they were only after the safety of the squatters most of whom, he said, reside in danger zones like waterways, railroad tracks and under bridges.

He said officials had also consulted residents and officials of villages before they started knocking down shanties in the province.

Wilfredo Villegas, chair of the Provincial Housing and Urban Development Office, said the rally was just a result of "miscommunication" between his office and the protesters.

"There was actually a meeting scheduled for today. We didn't know why they mounted their rally when we were ready to talk with them," he told the Inquirer.

Fajardo admitted that they had arranged a meeting with Mathay. Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Execs seek PUV access to Kennon

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET: THE PROVINCE's peace and order council shot down a proposal to declare the regional chief of the Department of Transportation and Communications persona non grata to avoid a dispute over Kennon Road from turning into an ugly word war.

Bar. Gov. Nestor Bengwen, the council chair, might not just meet a crash with the top DOTC official, Federico Munsayac Jr., who appeared firm in enforcing a circular he issued on Aug. 24 that barred public utility vehicles (PUVs) from passing through Kennon.

Bengwen said he would ask Munsayac to withdraw the circular, saying the official was not authorized to declare the 41.2-km mossy road unusable. Told about the move, Munsayac said: "I will stick to my circular."

Munsayac issued Memorandum Circular No. 2007-001, which directed PUVs to take the Pallopic-Asipinin Road (formerly Marcos Highway) instead.

Bengwen questioned the directive after the Department of Public Works and Highways stated that the DOTC was not the proper authority to issue the traffic advisory on Kennon's safety. The DPWH has asked Munsayac to recall the circular.

But Munsayac is unfazed. The circular, he said, would all the more sustain, especially now that the DOTC already assumed the functions of an issue agency road safety committee. Jeninar Carvibo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Port strike brings ₱20M in lost income

By Romy Arnaldo and Alex V. Pal
Inquirer Visayas

DUMAGUETE CITY—A DOST WORKERS' strike entered its fourth week yesterday, resulting in income losses of nearly P20 million to the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and shipping lines.

Over 300 workers belonging to the dismissed Labor Union-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) started the strike on Sept. 9 after the winning bidder for cargo handling services refused to take all of them.

The Soldier Frederick Cuenca Brokerage Services Inc. (FCSSI), refused to absorb all members, saying it was not bound by the collective bargaining agreement between them and their former employer, Cipex Stevedoring and Arrastre Inc. The CBA expired in 2004.

And Obar, FCSSI legal counsel, said the employment of the parties was a management prerogative.

Raul Sarino, Visayas PPA port manager, insisted that their operations this week during a forum attended by businessmen from the Negros Oriental Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Friday. "What we have must is to be hungry by a group of men complaining persistent," he said.

The PPA had earlier received a copy of a decision of the regional trial court denying a petition for a temporary restraining order filed by the strikers.

Since September 2002, the PPA had taken over cargo handling services after the workers struck against the Cipex Stevedoring and Arrastre Inc. When the strikers demanded permanency, a bidding was held in December 2006, but the arrastre group backing them had lost the bidding.

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NEWS

GMA called a hypocrite over UN rights speech

By Tj Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS drawn a sharp rebuke from the mother of missing activist Jonas Burgos and from a human rights group over a speech she delivered at the United Nations in New York.

The President, in her address to the 62nd UN General Assembly last Friday, said the Philippines envisioned the most democratic nation in Asia and did not tolerate human rights violations.

"She was upbeat that Mrs. Arroyo, in her speech before the UN General Assembly, would [say] without batting an eyelash that her government is respecting human rights," said Amnesty secretary general Marie-Hélène Enriquez yesterday.

"That's a hypocrisy," Enriquez said in a hearing, adding that the families of the 800 victims killed during the President six-year administration "had not been given justice."

For her part, Edita Burgos, whose 38-year-old son Jonas was allegedly abducted by military agents on April 28, questioned the President's sincerity in resolving the human rights violations in the country.

"I question the sincerity of the top official of the government. If she were really sincere and so about her troops [to investigate the case], I would have what happened to my son. It's been five months," Burgos said.

Enriquez and Burgos were reacting to moves last week to amend section of the UN Human Rights Council and to present a report on the human rights situation in the Philippines by Rio a complaint on the young Burgos' case.

The UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) is set to review the Asian's pending request to find version to date November.

Enriquez, widow of the late press freedom icon Jaime Ps., said the government could show its sincerity by allowing the WGEID to come to Manila and investigate the disappearances.

She said the group had sent itself the Philippine government of its intent "to be invited" to Manila to conduct a fact-finding mission as early as May 2006 but had not gotten a reply.

"If the government is sincere, then she [Mrs Arroyo] should respond to the solicitation," Burgos said at the briefing.

Human rights group Karapatan said Arroyo's statement in the solicitation, the WGEID cannot act on her complaint and come to Manila to investigate how state champions and, among other cases.

Burgos also said the Supreme Court's issuance of the rules of the writ of amparo "brings hope" to the families of victims of disappearances. However, she could not say whether she would apply for such a writ in her son's case.

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Stop killings, disappearances, GMA orders new PNP chief

By Alexis Pupa and Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO TOLD newly installed Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. to put a stop to the spate of political killings that has tainted her administration.

"Let human rights be the legacy of Sonny Razon," Mr. Arroyo said, using the new police chief's nickname, in her speech at the turnover of the PNP leadership yesterday from the retiring Oscar Calderon to Razon.

Razon, previously deputy director for administration and a member of Philippine Military Academy Class '74, will reach the retirement age of 56 in September next year, which gives him less than a year to accomplish his mission.

Razon had earlier been appointed head of Task Force Usig, the PNP group assigned to investigate the killings of political activists and journalists. No big breakthroughs have reached, however, and no arrests have been announced.

Update on arrests, convictions

"The first report I want to receive from Director is an update on arrests, conviction and the imprisonment of those responsible for the killings of political activists and journalists," the President said, adding that both communist rebels and rogue elements in the security forces were to blame.

"You and we lose no unfortunate history of political violence by those on the Left and the Right and we hope to break that cycle once and for all," she said.

A United Nations human rights rapporteur recently found the government less and doing enough to stop the killing and disappearance of political dissidents, estimated at over 800 in the past five years. Most of the killings have been linked to soldiers.

Mr. Arroyo said she would back Razon with funds and equipment to improve investigations, including those against military forces.

"If there are rogue elements, they must be caught to justice," she added.

To stop the killings, the President said she would follow the recommendations of the Melo Commission the body tasked to look into the killings—to establish separate courts, expedite prosecutions, expand victim assistance and increase funding for more investigators."

No one should have to die

"No one should have to die for speaking out for their political beliefs," she said.

The President, however, said terrorists like the Abu Sayyaf group and armed communist "must be checked."

In her inauguration speech, however, Razon was apparently impressed by the sharp focus on extrajudicial or political killings in the country. He stressed his mission to restore community safety and restore the strained "winning path" (winner policemen) to the PNP.

He announced his "Report Me Go Top" program and called on the public to text him, or at least the police leadership, their complaints about rogue cops through SMS number 2002.

But in an interview with reporters after the turnover rites, Razon said he would do his best to stop the political killings.

"Kaya po nga ni Inabayan (We are in it... and we will do it)."

Respect for human rights

"We will do everything we can to achieve total observance of human rights and international humanitarian law," Razon said. He promised to launch a new program emphasizing respect to human rights among policemen.

"This is also part of 'winning path'—to not only take care of our communities but also to take care of the rights of our citizens.

For now, he said the PNP will hold seminars and symposia on human rights for policemen.

Razon said he would discuss the orders of the President in a command conference.

He was confident, he said, the PNP leadership would clear its image of a human rights violator.

Aplus METRO
Editor Evan C. Dipasupil

DID YOU KNOW

LINCOLN seven years ago, Globe Motors Inc. in Pasay City—the country's premier jeepney maker—stopped production because of rising costs and low sales, laying off 200 workers. The company, established in 1955, decreased production from 16 vehicles a day in the mid-1980s, to just five a day, despite three shifts worldwide. The jeepney, known as the "King of the Road," was a creation from surplus US Army jeeps after World War II. —Cyril L. Bonalaan, Inquirer Research

Muntinlupa City university tutors fired

'Other casual employees laid off with no warning and for no clear reason'

By Julie M. Aurelio

AROUND 50 OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES OF the city government-run Pamantasang Lungsod ng Muntinlupa (PLMun) have been laid off from work since June for no clear reason.

Among those fired by the Board of Regents (BOR) were PLMun president Dr. Miguel Galvez, vice president Brenda Arcibo, criminology dean Hector Villar, education dean Leonora Soliven, guidance department head Dr. Corazon Palomique, registrar Remedios Cunanan and Material Survey Training Program chief Jesus Espeleta.

"It's not clear why they were terminated," a PLMun staffer who spoke on condition of anonymity told the Inquirer.

The source said Soliven, Palomique, Espeleta and Villar were relieved by the board only last month.

All of the university's employees, including its officials, are casuals.

Some of those fired were told by informers verbally and no letter was given to them. Others reported for work only to find

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13 passengers hurt in 3-vehicle collision in QC

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THIRTEEN PERSONS were injured, three of them seriously, in an accident involving two passenger buses and an 18-wheel truck before dawn yesterday in Quezon City.

A Quezon City Police District Traffic Sector 2 report identified 10 of the wounded as Francisco Romero, 36; Gilbert Berbas, 20; Edgardo Berbas, 40; Emmanuel de la Paz, 42; Commander Mendano, 31; Carlo Bonquin, 25; Marlon Hernia, 33; Eleazar Mangubat, 37; Rolbert de Ligaan, 34 and Joseph Bituel Jr., 31.

Passengers

They were passengers of the Nova Transport (TWB 949) or PT Liner (XFH 670) buses.

It also injured driver Francisco Ignacio, the driver of the Isuzu truck (XAH 918), his assistant Daniel Bravo and another identified only as Roberto. All three were taken to the East Avenue Medical Center.

The police said Ligaan, Bituel Jr. and Roberto sustained serious injuries, while the rest were treated for slight bruises and cuts.

The incident happened at around 3:30 a.m. yesterday.

Impact

The 18-wheel truck was making a U-turn on the southbound lane of Commonwealth Avenue near Philcoa when the Nova Transport bus slammed into it, followed by the other bus.

Because of the impact, Bravo was thrown against the windshield of the truck while the other injured persons fell off their seats.

The driver of the Nova Transport bus, who was not identified, escaped.

Heavy traffic

The accident caused heavy traffic on Commonwealth Avenue up to the Tandang Sora area until the vehicles were removed before noon.

Doctor in Mendez slay shows up at NBI

By Tina G. Santos

THE DOCTOR who brought suspected hazing victim Cris Anthony Mendez to the Veterans Memorial Medical Center finally surfaced at the National Bureau of Investigation yesterday afternoon.

Dr. Francisco Cruz, an ophthalmologist at the VMMC in Quezon City, in previous weeks, refused to heed a summons of the NBI to shed light on the case.

Accompanied by his new lawyers, Norberto Malit Cruz received at the NBI Anti-Hazing Division office shortly before 2 p.m. He, however, declined to be interviewed by the media.

Rolando Ana, chief of the NBI ATI, declined to reveal the content of Cruz's statement but claimed that it was "very vital" to the investigation.

Malit said his client had every intention to come out and cooperate in the investigation but "was given a different advice by his previous lawyer."

"His (Cruz) first lawyer had a different approach," Malit told reporters.

"I advised him to come out in the open, otherwise he would be blamed. Mahobsion siya di-on."

Cruz's first lawyer, Rafael Arevalo, was reportedly provided by the Sigma Rho, the fraternity allegedly in the group Mendez, a public administration major, tried to join.

Cruz did not show up at the NBI earlier because he was summoned for his son, Miko, who reportedly accompanied him in taking Mendez to the government hospital, Malit said.

"Si Dr. Cruz ayaw pa nitong yung anak niya, natatakot na rin," the lawyer said as he confirmed that it was Miko who brought Mendez to the fraternity house in Congressional Village, Project 8, Quezon City.

Miko was a law student at the UP and reportedly a member of the Sigma Rho fraternity, Malit said.

"Miko is young and gullible. Maybe he was the one asked by the group to bring Mendez to the hospital since his father is a doctor," Malit explained.

"Bring a doctor, the elder Cruz acted on his instinct to check on Mendez and bring him to the hospital," he added. "When else do you do when you are somebody in that condition?"

He said it was only in the hospital that Cruz probably realized the gravity of the situation.

"Ngayon olong nag-sisi ang tatay," Malit said, adding that he would also convince Mendez's mother and companion in the investigation. Without saying that having actually occurred, Malit said Mendez's injuries were "obviously being made."

On Aug. 27, Mendez was brought to the hospital by Cruz and several others. He was declared dead on arrival; the findings of an autopsy report showed that he was beaten up badly because of numerous bruises all over his body.

Apart from bringing the 20-year-old graduating college student to the VMMC, Ana had said it was also Cruz who approved the release of Mendez's body to the St. Peter funeral parlor.

AFTER being a no-show several times, Dr. Francisco Cruz finally showed up at the office of the National Bureau of Investigation yesterday. ARNOLD ALMACEN

Underpass to Quezon Memorial Circle now open

By Kenneth M. del Rosario

PEDESTRIANS WHO WANT TO go to the Quezon Memorial Circle from the Quezon City Hall—and vice versa—no longer have to dodge speeding vehicles on the busy Elliptical Road.

They can now safely cross the road using the just completed pedestrian underpass built by the city government. "This would greatly lessen, if not eliminate, the risk of accidents posed to pedestrians crossing the street because they can now use the underpass," said Commissioner Viola, a city engineer involved in the P49-million project.

"The underpass is also supposed to greatly improve the traffic flow on Elliptical Road since there would be less people crossing the street," he added.

Medes on the installation of elevators to allow the disabled to use the underground walkway is yet to be completed.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte yesterday inaugurated the underpass which he said was in line with his government's infrastructure development program.

The opening of the walkway is also part of the city's celebration of its 68th foundation day on Oct. 12, he added.

Alfredo Estacenia, a security guard manning the underpass, said vendors would not be allowed in the underpass to allow pedestrians to move freely.

Columnist Jarius Bondoc's dilemma

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS Chair Benjamin Abalos has resigned over allegations that he was a major player in the bungled Broadband Network project scandal.

The public is sweating the suspension of other major players in the scandal.

But knowing them, I doubt if the significant others will ever resign.

* * *

Rolando Neri, former director-general of the National Economic and Development Authority, has indicated he would no longer give the Senate blue ribbon committee crucial testimony that would directly link President Macapagal-Arroyo to the controversy.

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

Neri, invoking executive privilege, refused to answer queries from senators last week about the alleged involvement of his boss in the scandal in the open.

* * *

The Supreme Court headline story Tuesday said Neri was ready to talk during closed-door executive sessions.

But then an administration senator said a Cabinet member illegally intervened.

The senator was identified in the report as Jinkee Arroyo, and the Cabinet member as Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya.

The report said that first lady Arroyo mentioned to Andaya in front the room after he saw that Neri was on the verge of talking.

My source in the Senate confirmed everything in the Supreme story.

But he said the story missed out on one detail: Neri, after talking the senators into closed-door executive sessions, tried to join.

Neri allegedly told Justice everything he knew about the NBN scandal, including details about shadow and businessman Ricky Razon, a friend of Mike Arroyo, the President's husband.

Justice told me he was forced by Supreme justices and journalism ethics. This was his dilemma. Whether or not to make public everything Neri told him about the NBN deal. Justice also asked my advice.

I told him that loyalty to his country should take precedence over other considerations.

* * *

Senator Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Biazon (ret.), former Marine commandant, is very sick, but his pallor refuses to send him to a hospital allegedly on orders of Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon.

Miranda, former Army Surgeon chief Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, and Marine Col. Ariel Querubin are among the several officers detained for their alleged involvement in an attempted coup two years ago.

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METROBRIEFS

Cops nab ex-lawman for violating gun ban

A FORMER police officer has been arrested in Caloocan City for violating the nationwide gun ban imposed starting last Saturday by the Commission on Elections for the Oct. 29 barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections.

Supt. Wilfredo Macaraig, city police chief, identified the former police officer as Ruben Alfonso, 39, who yielded a 9-mm firearm. Policemen were on patrol near the weekend when they flagged down Alfonso who was on a motorcycle. They searched the man and found the firearm in his possession. The police said they would charge Alfonso with violating the Omnibus Election Code and illegal possession of firearms. The gun ban will be in effect until Nov. 15.

Mary C. Cayapi

Police official's death still under investigation

POLICE are examining shreds of text and found pieces which were found at the spot where the body of Quezon City police official Supt. Jose "JoeGar" Garcia was discovered by his son, Jericho, before midnight Saturday. Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula of the QC Police District said they would try to reconstruct the pieces to help locate clues these small documents reported that Garcia had two bullets on the night he was found dead. The body of Garcia, 51, commander of the QCPD Station 10, was found at the back of his house in Veterans Village. Barangay Pansol, Quezon City at around 11:30 p.m. He had a single gunshot wound in the chest and was lying on a mat in a hut in the backyard. Gatdula added that their initial investigation showed that Garcia's death could be work-related but they did not rule out the possibility of suicide.

Kenneth M. del Rosario

Another body found

THE BODY of a man believed to be a victim of summary execution was found inside a garbage bag yesterday morning in Culiat, Quezon City. Police described the victim as between 25 and 30 years old, 5'6" tall and dressed in a sleeveless shirt and a pair of denim shorts. He bore several tattoos all over his body. The victim had right side wounds at the chest while his hands were tied together with packaging tape. The incident near the fourth lamp-post of Culiat. The body was found inside a garbage bag.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Ex-barangay watchman shot dead in Quezon City

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A FORMER BARANGAY WATCHman was shot dead by a man as he heard a motorcycle yesterday morning in Quezon City.

Carlos Pinlac, 61, a 48-year-old widower, was sipping coffee in front of his house on Covington Road in Barangay Holy Spirit when he was shot twice in the face.

The victim, who used to be a member of the barangay's peace and security unit operation of fire, died on the spot.

A report from the Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit showed that the incident happened at 6:15 a.m.

PO3 Joseph Dino said that after shooting the victim, the gunman picked up a motorcycle that was standing nearby and left with her on his motorcycle.

Dino said that Francisco resigned from the barangay here several months ago to work abroad.

"He may have been involved in disputes when he was still a barangay watchman, and this could have been the only opportunity for the suspect to kill him," the case investigator said. The female with him have been the lookout, Dino added.

Muntinlupa City university tutors fired

From page A-7

ure that they had been replaced," the source added.

"The people are so demoralized. They don't know if they will still be on next month's payroll because of the wave of terminations," the source said.

The personnel changes have sparked accusations that Mayor Aldrin San Pedro, who was elected to office only last May, was behind the move which was branded as "politically motivated."

San Pedro, however, denied this.

"They can think that way but the truth is that some of them were not. Because we I had done replaced," he told the DAILY over the phone.

According to him, Librohon and Espino were fired after the BOR learned that they were also serving as officials of the University of Manila in Leyte province.

Librohon was the president of the university while Espino was the vice president, he added.

"Nalinaw'n nila ang PUMan. Ngayon sa napkinlabasan ang problema sa PUMan (They were finding the PUMan. It's only now that the problems at the PUMan are starting to surface)," San Pedro said.

According to the mayor, he has given Dr. Martinez, the university's new president, "a free hand in assessing the performance of the school's teaching staff."

"I am still pushing to introduce performance positions at the PUMan so that qualified professors will be promoted and have security of tenure. We will implement this once we've explained the nonperforming staff," he said.

But Roger Medina, the president of the student council, criticized the firing of the school staff, pointing out that it was the students who are affected.

He asked the school administration to wait for the end of the first semester before firing any more teachers or staffers.

The Espinos ruled in control PUMan officials for comment but calls to the university's phone lines were unanswered.

Commission on Higher Education lawyer Rustinos Reginaldo, meanwhile, said that the hiring and firing of employees in colleges and universities being run by local governments were "out of the commission's jurisdiction."

Reginaldo added that the "CHED's only concerns are the programs and courses being offered by these schools."

With Jerry Esplanada

Bomber in burqa kills 15 in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN — A SUICIDE bomber disguised in a woman's burqa has set a police checkpoint on fire in northwestern Pakistan on Monday, killing at least 15 people including five policemen, officials said.

The blast happened on the outskirts of Bannu, a key garrison town near Pakistan's troubled tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, where the heaviest fighting of Qaida and Taliban militants.

It was the latest in a string of deadly attacks in Pakistan since government troops stormed the al-Qaida-linked Red Mosque in Islamabad in July and ousted clerics have Pres Musharraf and vowed revenge.

"A man disguised in a burqa got out of an ambulance when police stopped the vehicle for a search at a checkpoint. He then blew himself up," police officer Asad Islam said.

Fifteen bodies had been brought to the local hospital, most of them wearing police uniforms, and twenty were treating 31 wounded people, some of whom were critically injured, doctor Mohammad Ramzan said.

"We have received some severed limbs and we are trying to ascertain if they belonged to the bomber," he said.

Four policemen were also among the dead, police officer Islam added.

Police sources said they had earlier received intelligence that suicide bombers dressed in all-covering women's burqas, a common garment in conservative areas of northern Pakistan, would launch such attacks.

They had beefed up security at all checkpoints and the vehicle entering the bomber was intercepted as a result, but the attacker blew himself up before they could check it, one source said.

Chief military spokesperson Maj Gen. Waheed Arshad confirmed the blast but dismissed earlier witnesses reports that the bombing targeted a military convoy passing through the town.

"It was a suicide attack. It was not targeted at any military convoy," he said.

Shortly the people have died in attacks blamed on Islamic militants, most of them suicide bombings, since the Red Mosque raid. Most of the attacks have targeted Pakistani security forces.

The mosque's cleric also coincided with the breakdown of a truce several years of peace deal between the government and Islamic militants in the tribal belt.

Al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden called on Muslims in Pakistan to wage holy war against the government of key US ally Musharraf and has vowed to turn it's new radio campaign aimed at Musharraf's overthrow.

In another video, Bin Laden's No. 2, Ayman al-Zawahiri, also warned that Musharraf would be "punished" over the killing of leading rebel cleric Abdul Rashid Ghazi in the storming of the Red Mosque.

Musharraf has been under mounting pressure from Washington to tackle militants, especially in the rebel border areas where US officials have said that al-Qaeda is regrouping to launch attacks on western targets.

The president, whose popularity has slumped in recent months, is aiming for reelection for another five-year term in a parliamentary vote on Saturday, a move that has sparked fierce political opposition. AFP

RASPARKOV: former world chess champion, a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin. AP

Kasparov picked to fight in Russia poll

MOSCOW — CHESS GREAT GARRY KASPAROV was named Sunday as the Other Russia opposition coalition's candidate for 2008 presidential polls, and vowed to fight for democracy against the Kremlin's political juggernaut.

Kasparov overwhelmingly won a party congress vote against four other contenders to run in the March 2, 2008, election to replace President Vladimir Putin.

"I will do everything possible for the ideas of Other Russia to win. This will work only if we stay united," he told the towering, striking the coalition stood for a "democratic and just Russia."

He received 465 of 494 votes cast, outpolling other nominees including former prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov and former Central Bank chief Victor Gerashchenko.

The Other Russia coalition, comprised of a variety of small groups opposed to Putin, is the only hostile opposition to the ex-spy and has been marginalized by the authorities.

While Putin has presented the election will give Sunday voters a free choice, most observers expect a carefully managed transition to a figure favored by the current administration.

Putin is obliged to stand down having completed two presidential terms, although he has said he will retain an unspecified influential role.

Kasparov frequently attacks Putin's leadership in his alleged corruption and "dictatorship," and has been accused of the media to silence prominent opposition politics.

Born of Armenian-Jewish parents in Baku, the capital of Oil Former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, in 1963, Kasparov took up chess at the age of six.

He was USSR junior champion by the age of 15, before becoming the youngest world chess champion at the age of 22 in 1985, having beaten his compatriot Karpov. AFP

Tokyo takes new steps to prepare for 'Big One'

TOKYO — SCIENTIFICALLY, IT'S almost a sure thing — Tokyo is overdue for a catastrophic earthquake. In fact, it's long overdue.

And when it does hit, officials say there is one other thing that is a near certainty — hundreds of thousands of people will be in need of shelter that the government will not be able to provide. Only 50,000 places to stay in 23 public facilities open to more than 600,000 more than shelters can now handle.

But with little space for new facilities, the city is hoping to cut down those numbers — and the numbers of deaths and injuries — by providing residents with the world's most technologically advanced earthquake system, which became operational on Monday.

The city is hoping that, with its extremely high population density and little space available to build new shelters, getting residents more information and even a slight heads up will cut down on casualties. It targets the secondary damage caused by fire and encourages them to plan ahead by how to cope and where to go.

The new warning system uses data provided by the Meteorological Agency which monitors an extensive network of sensors deep underground nationwide that estimates the intensity of a quake as soon as the ground ruptures.

The system works by detecting primary waves, which spread from the epicenter of a quake and travel faster than the secondary waves that cause most damage. Those waves can be able to put out a warning ahead of July's magnitude 6.8 quake.

Otherwise, the city's options are limited.

Tokyo is cordoned by dozens of mild to moderate tremors each year.

But over 70 years or so, the fault line under Tokyo produces a considerable one. Many also be forced to look for emergency shelter. But a Cabinet Office survey of the local governments that make up Tokyo completed in July found no more at 600,000 people could find themselves turned away for lack of space.

The standard of people searching for space would be not to lose up 400,000 if investors are directed to find their way to shelters not in their neighborhood. AP

THE AFTERMATH: shelter, one of Tokyo's busiest, is miles after such a magnitude earthquake struck near the Japanese capital on Sept. 1, 1923, killing about 140,000. Scientifically, it's almost a sure thing — Tokyo is awaiting a catastrophic earthquake.

PHOTO taken in 2000 shows the late Mac Miami performing Lois Maxwell (left), and in her arms, Samantha Bond, posing with guns used in earlier James Bond movies.

'Miss Moneypenny'; 80

OTTAWA — OH, SOMEN, LOIS Maxwell played the romantic James Bond interest named Miss Moneypenny in real life, she was more than her match — an adventurous traveler, an entertainer, and a flirt to the end.

Her death on Saturday at Pensauken Hospital in Pensauken, Australia, from a combination of lung and vascular disease, followed several weeks of treatment there. She was 80.

The Canadian-born actress, a resident in 14 James Bond movies in the starring role opposite Sean Connery, and the Miss Moneypenny role in 1962 alongside Sean Connery in "Dr. No."

And she continued to play the secretary to spy chief M. constantly flirting with her 007 agent, until 1985's "A View To A Kill" with Roger Moore.

In a 2005 interview Maxwell said she insisted when she took on the role that she be allowed to give Moneypenny a "background" and that Bond director Terence Young not "put my hair in a bun and horn-rimmed glasses on me."

She "let-light mind" with an actress explained several reasons between Moneypenny and Bond and the chemistry sucked.

"She was my lucky token," Moore said the British broadcaster like Bond often her death.

"[People] who remember the Bond films with Moneypenny will remember her with great affection. She certainly will be missed by me and I'm sure by millions of fans around the world."

Born Lois Ruth Wecker on February 14, 1927 in Ontario, Canada, Maxwell was aware from home at 16 to join the Canadian Army Show.

She changed her name to Hollywood, won a Golden Globe award and worked with Ronald Reagan on "Brothers For Bonnie."

When the first Bond movie came along, Maxwell was an experienced actor in need of an income after her husband, British television executive Peter Mitchell, developed a heart problem. AFP

Study defends assisted suicide

PORTLAND, OREGON — DOCTOR-ASSISTED suicide in the Netherlands and the only US state where it is legal does not result in more deaths among certain groups of terminally ill patients such as the poor or the elderly, according to a study released Monday.

Critics quickly dismissed the study, to be published in the October issue of the Journal of Medical Ethics, saying its leaks failed to disclose she is a member of the advisory board of the Death With Dignity National Center, a nonprofit that defends the Oregon assisted suicide law and actively campaigns for legalizing assisted suicide in other states.

The study leader, University of Utah bioethicist Margaret Battin, argued that these doctors and a public health researcher wrote to officials and that her findings should have disclosed her board role.

The study analyzed nearly a decade of data from Oregon — the only US state with an assisted suicide law — and 10 years in the Netherlands. The results contradict claims by opponents that allowing doctors to help terminally ill patients end their lives can add a much to a higher number of deaths among certain groups.

The study looked at 10 groups identified as vulnerable, including the elderly, the poor, women, minorities, the uninsured, children, the chronically ill, the less educated and people living alone. Battin said she should have disclosed her board role.

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Researchers found that in both Oregon and the Netherlands, the average age of patients who died with a doctor's assistance was 70 years old. Eighty percent of the patients suffered from cancer.

Only 0.01% patients appeared to request assisted suicide or higher rates than the general population, researchers said. The highest rate among AIDS patients, however, rate for homosexual men in the Netherlands between 1997 and 1995, before more effective drugs became available to control the disease, the study said. AP

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quirez

US still world's top arms supplier

WASHINGTON—The United States maintained its role as the leading supplier of weapons to the developing world in 2006, followed by Russia and Britain, according to a congressional study to be released Monday. Pakistan, India and Saudi Arabia were the top buyers.

The global arms market is highly competitive, with manufacturing nations seeking both to increase profits and expand political influence through weapons sales to developing nations, which reached nearly $30.6 billion in 2006.

That sales total was a slight drop from the 2005 figure of $31.8 billion, a trend explained by the strain of rising fuel prices that prompted many developing states—except those that produce oil—to choose upgrading current arsenals over buying new weapons.

The report, "Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations," was produced by the Congressional Research Service, a division of the Library of Congress, and covers a number of interesting observations linking arms sales and global politics.

For example, Russia has been a major supplier of weapons to Iran in past years, including a $700 million deal for sophisticated missiles in 2005. But no sales ever Iran's nuclear program can be seen as having deterred Moscow from concluding significant new conventional arms deals with Iran in 2006, deals that could be viewed as overly provocative while the Security Council debates new sanctions on Iran.

The study makes clear also that the United States has signed weapons sales agreements with nations whose records on democracy and human rights are subject to official criticism.

The most consequent of major arms accord agreements such Pakistan but year renewed civilian over who elect the Bush administration was elevating its weapons transfers priorities above its human rights and democracy promotion objectives around the world.

Pakistan was a major recipient of American arms sales in 2006, including the $1.4 billion purchase of 36 new F-16C/D fighter aircraft and $400 million in upgrades for Pakistan's older versions of the F-16. AFP

Israel freeing 87 Palestinians to aid Abbas

MEMBERS of South Korea's special warfare command perform the taekwondo martial art Taekwondo at the 59th Armed Forces Day ceremony at the military headquarters in Gyeryong, on Oct. 1. AFP

Money, not nuclear arms, on table at summit of divided Koreas

By Jon Herskovitz

SEOUL—THE LEADERS OF DIVIDED Korea will share smiles this week and talk cash but don't expect Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal, longrange missiles or human rights abuses in favor of fostering visions of unification.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun said he wants peace between the states, unhindered shift in war, and long pledges billions of dollars for the North—but he's unprepared to rap or bash the reclusive Kim Jong-il for Pyongyang for the Oct. 2–4 summit.

"South Korea's economic cooperation is aimed at enhancing military tension," said Kong Hyung-gun, a research fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU). "A peaceful peninsula has a direct impact on South Korea's economy."

South Korea has fared for decades with the North's military threats, but it fears a sudden collapse of Kim's government and worries that the hundreds of billions of dollars it would cost to absorb its impoverished neighbor would wreck its economy.

North Korea's crumbling economy has become a shambles under Kim while his neighbor's has surged. He faced by massive summer floods and 1994 famine that killed up to 2 million people, North Korea depends on food and oil handouts.

The summit—only the second between the erstwhile foes since the peninsula was divided after World War II—will be high on symbolism, with Roh's motorcade to the reclusive North Korean capital set to be met out into Pyongyang's streets to cheer the leader of South Korea—a country the North has painted as 1.2 million-strong Israeli attack.

Roh will travel in a motorcade from Seoul to Pyongyang on Tuesday, stopping out of his bullet-proof limousine to become the first leader from the South to walk across the fragile fortified border.

On the Northern capital, he is to set off on his 10-hour-plus flight to greet stepping soldiers, dancing schoolgirls and a massive flip-card accordion section that promises mollification—but under the North's communist banner.

According to some media reports, Roh plans to give Kim Jong-il a large fat jaguar that passed away in Seoul's 109 zoo—one that Kim had to be inside in Seoul's pouch.

The first summit in June 2000—also held in Pyongyang—broke the ice in the two countries' Cold War rivalry and launched economic and humanitarian projects.

Officials said Roh might propose new projects to rebuild the North's dilapidated infrastructure and develop joint economic zones in the isolated state whose moves by human is intended new could facilitate reunification by huge land mines.

Most South Koreans want unification, but a recent survey said that three in four want the process to move slowly.

CHEO wooly Roh may pledge 50 meals in oil that North Korea still pay for its nuclear weapons, backed by regional powers to scrap its nuclear arms program, one of Asia's greatest security threats. Reuters

Fatal US plane crashes drop 65 percent over 10 years

WASHINGTON—AFTER TWO HEADLINE crashes in 2006 that together killed 375 people, a White House commission told the airline industry and its regulators to reduce the domestic rate of fatal accidents 80 percent over 10 years. That goal looks easily reachable.

They have come close to meeting that goal. Barring a crash before midnight Sunday, the drop in the accident rate will be about 65 percent, as one fatal accident in about 4.9 million departures, from one in nearly 2 million in 1997.

The rate for major airline crashes involving scheduled flights this year in the United States and last one fatal accident. A mechanic who was trying to clear the cabin door of a chartered Boeing 737 on the ground in Venice, Miss., killed the passenger during a commotion.

"This is the golden age of safety, the safest period in the entire history of the world," said William G. Hinkley, the administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, in a speech to an aviation group in Washington on Sept. 13, two days before the five years to ended.

The reasons for the improvement may be luck, as there is an element of randomness to crashes. But part of the explanation certainly lies in the payoff from sustained efforts by American and many foreign airlines to identify and eliminate small problems that are common precursors to accidents.

Such efforts started three years to low-developed airlines have also benefited from equipment improvements, like cockpit instruments that help planes steer clear of mountains when visibility is poor, and air engines that are so reliable that pilots can go through their entire careers without seeing one fail.

Together, the changes have made it possible to better rejig air routeways to prevent planes from moving into the path of other aircraft.

"It's not one thing. It's a series of small things," said John Cox, who was an Air Line Pilots Association safety representative for 20 years.

Despite the safety improvements these days, not all the trends are positive. Airports have lately recorded a disturbing number of what they call "precursor events" because someone made a wrong turn or a controller made an error. On July 31, for example, a United plane in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., took a wrong turn onto a runway where a Delta Air Lines plane was supposed to land; the two came within 100 feet, according to the FAA. AFP

Pragmatic admiral takes the helm as American military's top officer

MULLEN reviewing officials at the 2007 Dedication Parade at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., on May 31. AP

WASHINGTON—THE 53 MILLION military completes a leadership change in the middle of a war, with a pragmatic navy admiral to help steer it through the most difficult year-odd years in Iraq.

Admiral Michael Mullen, former chief of US naval operations, takes over as chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from Marine Corps General Peter Pace at a ceremony at a Civil War-era fort overlooking the Potomac River.

Mullen, 60, is expected to bring a fresh perspective in a military stretched to the breaking point by repeated deployments and fighting challenges beyond the Iraq war, including Iran's potential smuggle to a nuclear power.

"We must rebalance our strategic risks carefully and as soon as possible," Mullen said in his hearing confirmation hearing in July.

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who has said he intends to approach Iraq in its regional context, said Mullen was also open because "he is a very smart manager of budgets" who looks at broad views of the military's needs and requirements.

Mullen has a wealth of naval experience. Before taking the helm of the navy in July 2005, he commanded US naval forces in Europe and Nato's Joint Force Command in Naples.

A Los Angeles native, he graduated from the US Naval Academy in 1968, served in Vietnam, commanded surface warships and a carrier battle group, and found time to study management at Harvard Business School.

Mullen aided Bumph his confirmation hearings, making clear to senators that he saw doubt that there can be a military solution to Iraq, without public service confidence.

Having what are now sent of troops and no interest of him will make much of a difference," he said. AFP

TV viewing by toddler should be curbed by age 5, study says

CHICAGO—YOUNG CHILdren's television viewing habits are a dilemma for parents because of potential harmful developmental, but a study released on Monday said children who stop watching so much by age 5 1/2 do not exhibit problems.

"A number of studies have documented negative effects of heavy television viewing. However, timing of exposure is an important consideration," said study author Estella Mistry of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"Reducing viewing to acceptable levels may reduce the risk of behavioral and social problems," she concluded, based on the study published in Pediatrics, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The pediatricians' group has issued guidelines that discourage television viewing among children younger than 2 years, and recommend children between 2 to 5 limit their viewing to less than two hours daily. The group also recommends against having a television in a child's bedroom.

"Despite these recommendations, many young children are consuming substantially more than two hours of television," the report said.

The researchers analyzed interviews conducted three years apart with the mothers of roughly 2,700 children to learn the children's viewing habits and whether they tended to be anxious, depressed, have sleep problems, have trouble concentrating, exhibit aggressive behavior or lack social skills.

Viewers percent of the children in the study had watched television more than two hours daily at the age of 2 1/2, but then cut back on viewing by the age of 5. AFP

"Children who reduced their viewing by 1/1/2 years of age were not at greater risk for behavior or social problems," said Dr. Cynthia Minkovitz, who also worked on the study.

The one out of five children who watched at least two hours of television a day throughout the study period were at greatest risk of behavioral problems. Also, children who developed the 5% weight by the age 5 were at somewhat higher risk.

Two out of five of the 5-year-olds in the study had a television in their bedrooms, which put them at risk of developing problems, the report said. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE
Nietes is 4th Pinoy world ring champ /A22

SPORTS
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Pacquiao drives to battle site

By Rocah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES—MANNY Pacquiao yesterday had an overdue haircut, shaved his goatee then looked at the mirror and quipped that he looked much younger now.

"Napreshong bata ako, eh (I look younger)," he declared before losing breath, visibly amused at his "clean" appearance.

Pacquiao did not say it but the ritual shearing could also be his way of shedding the wet weight.

He zoomed today to the hobby site in Los Angeles for the announcement Oct. 6 rematch with Mexico's Bravo Antonio Barrera.

He did not seem to be rush, but claiming he has visibly shaved off years spoke of the brimming native confidence about a septet conquest of Barrera, who has stopped four years ago.

"It's been three months and we're so close the rematch but, more than the chemicals will be rem... age will surely be the...

AFTER sporting a goatee and long hair during training, Manny Pacquiao gets a clean before driving off to Las Vegas. RICKY TORRES

...deciding factor in the second en... counter between the two... greatest warriors.

Barrera, 34, will not unveil a facial makeover, a lot of sexy paunches, as he still looks young as a legitimate movie-world hunk.

No war statement

But he will have to surpass himself to beat the young years that have moved to conspire against his legs.

Definitely at his peak, Pacquiao again offered to issue a war statement, a dirty jab left with trainer Freddie Roach.

"We're working double time to shorten the punches," Roach explained before the weekend break.

He however no longer spoke of the killer blow, school additions to the Pacquiao arsenal, subjects he has been grueling silence in accord with Pacquiao.

"Sir Arthur na lang magkumentaryong ano ninigo ang nagaling (We'll know who's better on the fight night)," Pacquiao, obviously tired of the non-stop chatting from the opposing camp, declared last week.

Tapering off

Pacquiao has already totaled 130 rounds of sparring, but he chose training here with another session, before the tapering off prefects in Las Vegas.

He had another big assist—a big scary and fitted sub-zonic disk...Jealous going to mess where he led in the offseason.

Roach will definitely be on Pacquiao's side but Barrera, whom the Fortune called the strongest of the Mexicans he has fought, won't again allow himself to be outscored and pushed around.

For sure, Barrera had a more composed training camp than the one Pacquiao had in Cebu City.

Pacquiao has displayed boundless stamina and punching power at Wild Card. But his defense was less than perfect.

THERE'S next season to look forward to for Ateneo Adamson and the Blue Eagles ANJAY TALA (INQ)

UAAP AFTERMATH

Eagles gear up for next season's flight

LORE TORRES | Ateneo Cabinet
5 p.m. – Ateneo Arena (Gate 4) vs. La Salle
(Game 1 of best-of-three series)

By Jeanine Y. Poyo

A DAY AFTER ATENEO BOWED OUT OF THE UAAP basketball competition, the Blue Eagles continued to don the sting. Not just the sun caused by a top-flight civil La Salle, but also the one jabbed out there by the diamond D'Blakkopo.

"In this end, there's obvious disappointment," said Ateneo coach Norman Black. "We were disappointed that we lost not just to La Salle but also to DLSU. If we didn't lose to DLSU we would have been an easier road to advance to the Finals."

The obstacle against the NU Bulldogs—a 99-88 overtime upset on the last day of eliminations...blows the Eagles' hold but this notice no longer in the semifinals.

The Eagles settled for a share of second place with the rival Archers, but they fell further to third place after dropping the playoff match that gave them the twice-to-beat bonus.

And it did turn out to be an advantage as the Archers needed two games to take the best Finals berth. Averaging three hard semifinal loss, the Archers advanced to the championship with a 65-60 triumph as the rivalry's winner side all showdown last Sunday.

But the setback still grounding the Eagles for long-suffering plans already set for next season.

"Definitely we have signed up for next year," said team manager Bucky Tolibo of Black, who will be on board for the fourth straight season. "We're considering [today's] coaching on the plans for next year."

Several collegiate tournaments are being lined up including the Champions League, the Tri Man-ila's Cup and possibly the PBL.

Black is also excited with his new recruitment class that will include NCAA juniors Most Valuable Player Ryan Buenafe of San Sebastian and Chiang Kai Shek scorer Justin Chua.

Buenafe averaged a base in the recent NCAA juniors tournament by leading the Staglets to the title with his all-around performances, some of which resulted into triple-doubles. The six-foot-five Chua, on the other hand, is considered as the best high school prospect under the radar.

The two are expected to more than make up for the graduations of Paul Asoa and Tino Lanete, and will link up with veteran Chris Tiu and returning sophomore Eric Salamat, Ved Gerardo and Manny Buchie.

"If you look at the overall picture, the team achieved more than what people expected us to achieve," said Black.

"Obviously we didn't have the talent level that we had last year, but the players nobody expected to do well improved a lot this UAAP season from the last season. Again, we'll work on the players' skills. The UAAP is a seasoned's league. Normally teams that have quality veterans are the ones who rule. The veterans are really the key."

RP lady shooter scores stunning upset

By Jove Navarro

SOMEBODY HAS JUST PUT THE Philippines in the prestigious shooting world map.

Grace Tan bagged the ladies' open crown in the European International Handgun Championship held recently in Chotel Hisar, Pernik, fetching reigning world ladies champion Gabriele Kraushofer of Austria.

A two-time silver medalist in the world championships for practical shooting, Tan collected 1,353 points while Kraushofer had 1,264.

The Austrian bet, who captured the 2005 World Shoot Championships in Ecuador, was followed by Czech Republic's Lenka Gerajci who got together 1,209 points for the bronze medal.

"I was in good shape during the entire tournament," said the 30-year-old Tan, who a silver medalist in the 1996 (Brazil) and 2000 (Cebu City) editions of the World Shoot, highly regarded as the Olympics of practical shooting.

"It was probably the result of all the difficulties I've been through while training for this event," Tan added.

With more than a thousand snipers from 30 countries participating, the European International Handgun Championship is held every two years, or one year before the world championships.

Tan, who used a nine-millimeter CZ custom-made gun, said the event would provide her ample experience in time for the World Shoot XV in Bali, Indonesia, in September next year.

British star bulldozes Briones' Beijing bid

By Mary Anthony Reyes

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND—ALEXANDRE Briones showed a lot of heart, but heart surely regions on the scoreboard.

The bat jin deployed by the Philippines to hone for an Olympic berth regained home-turf advantage Nov. Nathan Cook (6-1) didn't bring fifth division teammate but ended up losing, 5-1, in the World Taekwondo Qualifying at the Manchester Evening News Arena here Sunday.

Slapping the first round after his opponent from Central Africa, Ben Gaston Mackinga, failed to get his right, the 25-year-old Briones bravely backed the jeers from the crowd but mainly failed to get the points his answer felt he deserved.

"Mind pa ako pagkabukang (I wasn't affected by that) crowd, pero baka nung tapa that I should have taken aggressive (some adjustment)," said the 2004 and 2005 Asian championship bronze medalist of his 1½ year-old but eventual the soundsboy of British taekwondo.

He was referring to the opening moments of the third round when the referee keyed to re-run taekwondo points to the Briton following a raging exchange where both fighters scored simultaneously. The match ended a 3-3 advantage from 2-3 at the close of the second round.

PSP coach Roberto "Bitoy" Cruz questioned it but the corner referees stood up and decided that the score would stand. Later in the round, Briones was even stripped of one point for grabbing Cook.

"Ang dahilan (There were several) points na dapat para sa atin (that should have been for us), pero siyempre (but of course it's) hometown kaya maganda ang pinalo ng mga (as awarding the opponent the points was easy for the) referees," said Cruz.

Nietes is 4th Pinoy world ring champ

By Edwin L. Lagumbay and Cheng Sioson, Correspondents

CEBU CITY—UNDEFEATED MICHELINE DONNIE NIETES won by unanimous decision over previously undefeated Pornsawan Kaitingdaengyim of Thailand to capture the WBO minimumweight crown at the Waterfront Cebu Hotel Sunday night and give the Philippines its fourth world title this year.

Nietes, from Murcia, Negros Occidental, raised his record to 31 wins and a one defeat with 13 Knockouts while handing Cebu's famed ALA Boxing Gym of Antonio L. Aldecoa its maiden world crown.

The judges saw it 116-113, 115-111 and 114-113, all for Nietes.

Boxing beautifully and showing no telltale debutante skills, Nietes used Pornsawan (40-1-0, 15 KOs) to the nerves with a body and head combination, topped by a right straight to the jaw, midway in the fourth round.

The Thai changed hats and won the fifth round, but Nietes was several of the remaining rounds through effective counter punching. Pornsawan was decided a point in the 10th round by referee Raul Gale for four blows.

Meanwhile, a Thai revealed that Pornsawan inked used "Chai Cho Chaw" better known as Anintoda, during the fight. Trainer Juanito Alibaca maintained the small bottle containing ointments from Pornsawan's corner after the fight.

Gamus and Amanchured Stand playmate Jose Urabia said the post-fight urine test he did on Pornsawan was positive for ephedrine, a regulated substance, that could have been triggered by the use of ointments.

WBO Asia Pacific chair Leon Panaguil is has issued a statement saying that ointments is not allowed in any fight, adding he will confer with the WBO-in this regard to take note.

DONNIE Nietes celebrates with his brothers.

Undercard results

Rising star 63 "Sharkwell" Bonol knocked down Mexican super flyweight champ Juan Guzman in the way to a fifth-round victory to capture the WBO Asia Pacific South super flyweight title.

Robert Allenar successfully defended his WBO Asia Pacific lightweight crown over Song Ju-sik of Korea via an 11th-round TKO.

Bodie Fuentes beat Ursulo Lucio over 12 rounds to keep his Philippine flyweight title.

Super featherweight James Baron, fighting in his second pro fight, sent Roldan Jaymalin Cagaanan de Oro to the mats here via a 3rd round TKO.

Nieves then joined the exclusive group of reigning Filipino world champs (former Cordoba [minimumweight, BB], Nestor Donaire, Jr. (flyweight, IBF, WBO) and Gerry Peñalosa (bantamweight, WBC).

Favorites, locals rock nat'l boxing tourney

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—THE DOminance led by Godfrey Gamoso and Jeegan Ladera stamped their class even as local fans made their presence felt at the start of host Bohol to the National Open Boxing Championships here Monday.

Gamoso, a Bohol Asian Games bronze medalist who's been in the training pool for six years, whipped Ilocos City's Michael Dorelio via RSC-CC1. Ladera stopped country-mate Jerry Acuel (Bad) to the bantamweight class in key Philippine Army's early show of force.

Philippine Navy/Diego Cinp.A soarin Ladera, silver medalist in both the 2003 Helsinki World Championship and the 2005 Manila Southeast Asian Games, won over Olongapo City's Nenets Borja via RSC-Ont. rdound in 1:39 of the first round of the flyweight division bout.

Not to be outdone, host Misamis Oriental's bets Jefferson Sinot, Tappino and Merlito Balijon gave local fans a treat at the front of the Dumolog and Lajoid of Mindanao.

Sinot forced Pablo Labrido of PNP's Baguio City to retire (ret.) in the fourth round of their bantamweight clash while Tappino won on points over Dumbanogan Diyo's Leo Mobarez, 22-17, in their lightweight encounters. Balijon was declared winner by walkover over Batangas's Adrian Lucilo.

"Medyo madali pa ang laban ko kasi wala pa po gumawg experience yong kalaban (My fight was quite easy because I had an inexperienced opponent)," said the 22 year-old Cardito, an Army corporal.

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CEBU's champion boxing coach Dr. Alejandro Sagarra Cuna demonstrates proper fighting stance at yesterday's festival at the Palace Sports Complex. Cuna is helping the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines coach the coaches.

Record field vying in Toby's youth b'minton

A RECORD FIELD WILL CONVENE FOR TOP honors in various age categories at the fifth annual Toby's Sports youth badminton tournament this month at the West Ohio Badminton Center in Sta. Cruz and Mill Dingwall.

The championships have grossed into a national event with participants in 20 year-old a venue to enhance their skills in a competition managed by professionals.

Registration, ongoing at all outlets of the country's pioneer in sporting goods, will run on Oct. 6.

Categories to be disputed are singles, doubles and mixed doubles for boys and girls in six age divisions, namely 8 under, 10 under, 12 under, 14 under, 16 under and 18 under.

Elimination rounds will be held at the New Ohio Badminton Center in Santa Rosa/de, Pasig City from Oct. 27 to 31 and Nov. 2 to 5 while the finals for all age divisions will be on Nov. 9 to 12 at Old Megastar.

"This has been the advocacy of Toby's Sports for the last four years...to develop passion and, success and healthy living through sports activities among the youth," said Toby Claudio, operations manager of Toby's Sports.

Purracan vs Purracan: Brothers discuss title duel

LIGHTWEIGHT BI-THE LAST CONDA ERNIE PURRACAN and ELDER BROTHER Rocky Purracan of La Salle talk about their much-awaited showdown this year's ILAAF men's basketball championship as they appear in tomorrow's sessions of the PSA Forum at the Shakey's LDR Remon Branch.

The brothers arranged the title showdown alternating with rival blowers Blue Eagles in their thrilling playoff for the second finals berth overday.

The Reactors had handled advanced to the best-of three series by virtue of their 74-68 garnering of the elimination.

Also sparkling in the 12:00 o.m. program and live over Sports Radio 918 and sponsored by Shakey's and Pepsi are Toby Claudio of Toby's Sports who will discuss the coming of Toby's Youth badminton tournament.

San Beda relives Caloy Loyzaga's golden era

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Mejia

VERILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO TALK ABOUT it, Ivay prospects look good for San Beda, the knock to back National Collegiate Athletic Association champions to win a "three-peat" and relive the good old days in the 1950s when the legendary Carlos "Caloy" Loyzaga led the Red Lions to three NCAA titles.

San Beda did it in 1951, 1952 and 1953 to retire the then much-coveted Santos Trophy.

But unlike in the past, when the behind-the-scenes power of the 6-foot-3 Loyzaga is rarely among local players at that time) earned impressive debut, one visionary hears the apt moniker "The Big Difference," this year's champion San Beda team banked heavily on a trio of cagers to send its 78th NCAA title behind Lervan (15-6, the losing Stalker the year and former member Aetnes (11-6).

* * *

Playing big roles for the winners were midweek-limited Dale Mercer, a well-built, 20-year-old 6-foot-3 pulsed forward who was named the 2006 season's most-feared Brandt Bharal, a sweet-shooting 6-4 player who is set to join Dale '76 Best in the 2006 this season; and tall and lanky Jane Heer, the 6-foot-8 Nigerian rebounder, who was last year's MVP-turned.

Although two players will be missed next season—Bharal and reserve forward Raymund Maggay, who is graduating—the team is close to intact.

Hear, it is safe to say that San Beda coach Frankie Lim is extremely lucky since two talented players from the team's junior ranks are slated to level up this team, namely, the 6-foot-8 Kevin Uda, another Nigerian who has the makings of a future San Beda and last year's Juniors Top Rookie MVP 6-foot-4 Elvin Pascual.

Lim is also counting on his other impact-performers like Borgie Hermida, Pong Escobal, Chino Trevina, top rookie Jesse Mancuso, Jhun-Jhun Gonzalez, Jay-R Taganas, Sal Dovan and Garvo Lanete.

* * *

A dynasty in the making!

"We are not really talking about that," said the 47-year-old Lim, who played for the championship San Beda team in 1977 and 1978. "Masyadong maaga (It's premature)."

But he said that it felt great winning the title on his maiden stint as coach. "It's very rewarding."

Pointing his players, Lim said they are all intelligent, nice guys (with a fighting heart).

"We're up against a tough team (Letran) that I told them not to doubt their capabilities."

"I got my confidence when my then rearguard Jay-R Taganas, who was supposed for that Beda with 25 points in Game 3 after hitting 35 in Game 1, ran-gained the Red Lions to sweep the best-of-three-title series.

Taganas said it was time to celebrate. He admitted even guessing of the Bond dilemma done after the was barred by NCAA officials for failing to ask the permission of the league who to joined the PBA Rookie Draft a few weeks ago. But he was able to report the team in the Final Four.

* * *

THE 12th Philippine Special Olympics Games got going today in Shanghai, with some 90 intellectually challenged athletes from the Philippines competing in 16 sports.

Nadia Gonsanvez, the legendary gymnast from Bacolod, who scored the first perfect "10" in the sport during the 1978 National Olympics and Special Olympics international chair Dr. Timothy Shriver visited Manila recently to provide the needed boost for the special athletes.

A highlight of their visit was a well-attended fun run held at Colonnade Center Complex composed which was participated by officials and employees of Procter & Gamble headed by P & G Philippine president James Michael Lafferty.

Americans have last laugh

WOOZY Austin walks to the 18th green...one of his famous "dive"—wearing a silver mask during the final day of singles matches at the Royal Montreal Golf.

MONTREAL—WITH FLAMBOYANT Woody Austin's giddy play and buoyant antics setting the pace, US golfers accumulated their mastery over the International Hands with a 19 1/2-14 1/2 triumph Sunday at the Presidents Cup.

The Americans improved to 3-1-1 in the rivalry with their first triumph off US soil in a match where Olympic Cup defendant Austin's mirthful mix a like after hitting a submerged ball was the biggest laugh for a relaxed US squad.

"This rookie thing is just going to add to my legacy," Austin said. "I'm like snowball anyway."

He might be just the extra ball US players need at the Ryder Cup, where US teams have lost five of their past six years against European rivals and generally played less than their best due to tensions.

"We're a little bit more loose this week. We have more fun and enjoy it. Why that means I answer less out play I'm not sure," US veteran Jim Furyk said.

"I go to Ryder Cups thinking I'm going to loosen up and enjoy the week and I'm always a bit tighter. I have fun, but it's always a little tighter.

"We've pull together, we have a ball at a time and we've been for three weeks at the Presidents Cup and we tend to get worse. I have no answer why that would be but it sure is fun to ride it while we're here."

Fiji's Vijay Singh said the US couldn't stem with the International, all from the US PGA Tour, is greater than when the US team meets Europe, where many of the players spend their season on the rival European Tour.

"They are very comfortable with us. We play on the US tour most of our friends are Americans. We play practice rounds with the guys," Singh said.

"When they play the European side they don't even know half the table, how they play, how they interact. That's the main reason I think.

"Our game, when we play our best, it's better than theirs."

Steve Stricker, who birdied 16, 17 and 18 when they had to."

David Toms led the US team at 4-0 and a halve after "Aquaman" Austin's 140-foot splashdown.

New blood like Austin might be part of the US answer as well. Austin made clutch birdies late in three matches to steal half points and while he only netted 1-1-2 with three halves in the week, his late zillion boosted US spirits and helped deep the International's momentum-building triumphs.

"He should be proud of the way he played. He one played Sunday," Furyk said. "He one also birdied 16, 17 and 18 when they had to."

THE US team gives with the trophy at the closing ceremonies.

Cruz joins RP-Harbour squad

By Jasmine W. Pays

A COUPLE MORE COLLEGIATE players will join the all-amateur Philippine team set to see action in the Southeast Asian Games this December in Thailand.

Santo Tomas star Jerry Cruz and San Beda guard Ping Escobal will round the squad's practice starting today together with 11 other players in the provisional lineup honored by two-time PBL MVP Jaycee Castro.

Other prospects for the roster mentioned by Jimmy Bacali include 6'8" American guard Gabe Norwood, whose citizenship due to the Philippine nationality, former PBA big man Alex Crisano and La Salle center Rico Maierhofer.

Bacali recently played a key role in the Lions' back-to-back championship run in the NCAA, while the 6-foot-5 Cruz leads the DAAP Most Valuable Player race.

"I saw them play several times and given enough time to train, they will click instantly with be SF team," said Milton Romero, Harbour Centre executive and project director of the SEAG team.

The pair will join the likes of Carlos, Jonathan Fernandez, Patrick Cabahug, Jeff Chan, and Nono Beliga. The provisional lineup will be reformulated by the SEAG task force today.

"If Norwood is available then we will take him to the team; he's a big asset and he has proven his worth on the all-pro RP team," said Erik Arejola, Harbour Centre team manager tasked to oversee the SEAG team's preparations. "As for Ormico, the guy seems to start a new career and we'll try to give him a chance."

CHAMPIONS TOO
Members of UAAP's women's basketball team hold the trophy of the Phra Amerikia Basketball Championship for women after winning against Cuba in Vinzhou, southern China Sunday.

Xavier captures Passerelle crown

MAPÚA SCHOOL HELD OFF A PESKY BALLZ by thomas de Morelia to win, 66-57 and capture the Passerelle women finalday in the 2001 Mito-sponsored BEST Center SBO Passerelle tournament at Xavier's Junior The competition court.

Jose Antonio Manuel sank a long jumper with only 15.2 seconds left to give Xavier a 66-56 lead which the Antonians failed to overcome as they made only one free throw out of several attempts.

Ateneo avenged its defeat later by bagging the 10P Daniel Rudenvoren Philippines) title at the expense of last year's winner La Salle Greenhills, 84-53.

Ateneo early by three points after the first quarter, the Antonians blew the contest wide opening the next canto to take a commanding 46-26 lead at the half.

Ateneo continued its fiery offensive behind Antonio Antolin, who scored 11 of his 13 points in the third, to seal La Salle's doom.

La Salle Greenhills and Xavier battled their rivals to take third in Passerelle and 3SE respectively. La Salle edged De La Salle Zobel, 75-56, while Xavier toppled Ben Beda, 51-44.

Kevin John Ong Lim of Xavier and Michael Jay Jocelson of Ateneo were adjudged most valuable players in the Passerelle and 3BP divisions, respectively.

PBAP's Posadas tops Sletba tilt

POSADAS: Perfect 300 for back-to-back champ

MYPLE POSADAS OF PASO BOWLMART notched back-to-back championship titles by topping the Open Masters division in the finals Sunday of the 11th Alvina Open at the Jim Lucas Bowl Grand Mall Bowling Center in Cabitos, Pasay.

Posadas capped a sterling performance with a perfect 300 in the fourth game of the gruelling 16-game series for a 3682 total.

But the ball is rely on back in handling a tough challenge from Jeff Chua of Tlanta Pensehead, who settled for second place with a 3649.

Posadas passed the field from the start, but nies her lead cut down to only 13 pinfalls after Charlo blasting one in games 13, 14 and 15.

Chua had a chance to serve the championship in the final game but managed only a spare in the final frame for a score of 201 against Posadas' 202.

Bacol Miranda of MTin wound up third with 3630.

The Carded Masters category finals proved to be a thriller, too, with Tobi Bonanza of Sim Jo Dee Long managing a come-from-behind victory against Steve Robles of the Pang Bowling Association (PBA).

Robles was a frame away from the championship and needed even a spare to win. But his roll resulted in a split and an open frame, enabling Bonanza to snatch the win with a

BY TOP CHOICE

SPORTS

RUNNERS, more than 5,000 of them, let off their first burst of speed as they answer the starting gun in the Cagayan de Oro 21K qualifying race of the 31st National Milo Marathon last Sunday.

Acsat makes UCAA finals

ERIC SANTIAGO CONNECTED TWO free throws with 4.5 seconds left to contribute to carry the Asian College of Science and Technology to an 89-83 win over Lyceum of the Philippines College and hand the Lightnings the first finals berth in the six-team Universities and Colleges Athletic Association (UCAA) men's basketball at The Arena in San Juan.

The 6'7" Sagittarius fished a foul from Jeremy Grand and sank the winning points while the Blue Lions failed to convert in the return play.

Acsat's best of three final five would either be St. Francis or Emilio Aguinaldo College, which were still playing as of press time.

"The boys' characters were put to a test," said Acsat coach Ricky Abenturan.

ORO MILO RUN QUALIFIER

Sawin-ay, Topia rule

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—ATITHAN RIDNAY Roger Sawin-ay of Bukidnon and the upcoming Cavalle Faith Topia of Pagadian City topped the 21-kilometer qualifying race of the 31st National Milo Marathon yesterday at the Don Gregorio Pelaez Sports Complex here.

Sawin-ay, who turned 33 last Saturday, survived a tough challenge from Leo Liberan and Jude Dula before winning in one hour, 10 minutes and nine seconds.

Liberan finished nine seconds behind Sawin-ay, with Dula another second further adrift. Sawin-ay pocketed P18,000 for the win while Liberan and Dula settled for the P8,000 and P4,000 purses, respectively.

All three advanced to the Milo Marathon finals on Nov. 10 in Metro Manila along with the top three finishers in the women's race.

The 28-year-old Topia was virtually unchallenged in the distaff side of this four-race held in partnership with Interwoven Pack Board Philippines, athletic and the Department of Tourism.

She breezed the laps in 1:20:06 to nailing her second straight title here.

Angelie Hurno was second in 1:20:08 and Michelle Yano third in 1:17:01.

Unlike Sawin-ay, who used to notch a league ranking in the finals, Topia is aiming for the national team.

"My chances are good because the national athletes won't be in the finals," said Topia. "I'm determined to make it to the top three."

The national athletes, including defending women's national champion Bea An Basaya, are expected to miss the Finals due to their stints in the 24th Southeast Asian Games.

The top three finishers in the 5K fun run were Jerry Hannah, Patrick Aragchi and Arnold Encarnacion in the men's division and Lalaine Dionisio, Stephanie Pamintuan and Imelda Bajarlon in the distaff race.

The winners in the 5K race for kids were John Cielo and Denzel Cabebe in the 6-9 age category and Jenny Glenville and Jennie Ta-Ing in the 10-12 age bracket.

Misamis Oriental Governor Comprehensive High School topped the team competition.

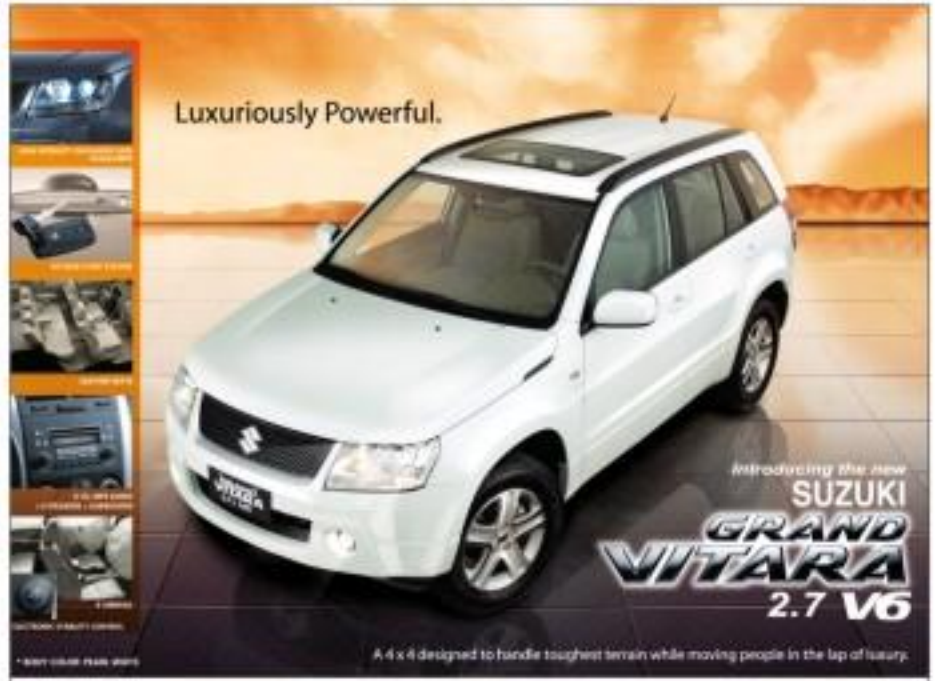
16th Intervillage golf under way today

GOLFERS FROM THE GOLD Rush's top villages converge today for the 16th Intervillage Golf Tournament Series at the Jack Nicklaus-signature course of Sherwood Hills Golf Club in Tanza Mandaue, Cebu.

"We are very proud to host inside it this city," said said Intervillage organizer Vince Villa-Pardo, also the president of Unlimited. "What inspires us to keep on going, even after over a having revenue on board as our partners to celebrate golf, a game we all love."

This year's Intervillage will be made possible by fifty Phases, the newest line of villadue phases equipment being distributed by the Solid Group, of-ficial it has agreed to be the tournament presenter of the six leg series.

"Everybody is eager to get the event underway," added Villarreal, who noticed the deal with Solid Group CEO Jesus Lim.



BUSINESS

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Peso seen firming up to 43:$1 by yearend

DENR Secretary Lito Atienza answers queries during the Philippine Mining Industry Lecture and Roundtable series 2007 at the Manila Golf Club, Forbes Park, Makati City. With her...Atienza is Chamber of Mines of the Philippines president Philip Bernardino (left).

Touches 44 level to close at 44.85

By Doris C. Dumlao

FRENCH BANKING GIANT BNP PARIBAS IS very bullish on the peso, expecting the local currency to firm up at 43 to a dollar by year's end, zooming to 37 next year, and further to 30 or at par with the Thai baht by end-2009.

Saturday, the peso closed at 44.85 from Friday's finish of 45.06 against the greenback.

"With a balance of payments (BOP) surplus at record levels and Philippine peso yields still offering a decent pick-up over declining US dollar yields, we see the Philippine peso as one of our key picks for 2008," BNP Paribas said in its October outlook on Asian currencies.

BNP Paribas expects the local currency to finally catch up with the Thai baht, which is seen to end this year at 31.50 and then marginally due to

PESO A5

(For stock market report, turn to Page B4)

Stocks up on mining gains

SHARE PRICES CLOSED it 7% percent higher yesterday as record gold prices and hopes of loans' borrowing costs sent the stock market index to its best finish in nearly nine weeks, dealers said.

They said all sectors advanced, but mining's outshone next after on strong demand after gold prices hit fresh 28-year highs last Friday.

STOCKS B3

Political will needed to boost RP competitiveness

By Dianne L. Lucas

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT needs to find more political will to improve the local business climate and consequently make the country more hospitable to foreign and local investors, according to business leaders.

At the same time, a unit of the World Bank recently unveiled the results of a competitiveness ranking survey which its officials hope would encourage authorities to persevere with reform measures meant to make the country more "business friendly."

In this year's edition of its "Doing Business" survey, International Finance Corp. (IFC) stated that the Philippines' ranking slipped to 133 in a field of 178 countries. This was slightly lower than the previous year's ranking of 130, and the rank of 121 from two years ago.

IFC officials dubbed the country as a "slow reformer" but expressed hopes that the survey would serve as a guide for the government on which aspects of the regulatory and business environment to focus on.

"We want to use this study as a tool," IFC acting country manager Jesus Ang said in an interview. "We want it to be used as a guide for the country's reform agenda."

He said the IFC's findings were aimed to help the private sector identify countries which are more business friendly, or—for existing countries—help assess the environment where they presently stand.

Indeed, beyond the country rankings, the survey also provides a detailed breakdown of aspects which businessmen and investors must contend with, how the Philippines ranks in terms of upholding the sanctity of contracts, the ease of hiring and firing employees, as well as the number of days it takes for a new business to secure all necessary regulatory permits.

"The [survey results are] aimed at both the public and private sectors," Ang said.

Asked about the country's steady decline in terms of business friendliness, Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II said that the Philippines was not lacking in "grand plans" to reform the system, but needed to focus more on the small things that turn off businessmen.

Roxas, known whenever he speaks, having headed the Department of Trade and Industry a few years ago, where he tried to clean out bottlenecks in the regulatory system.

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Holding dollars makes no cents

A GERMAN FACTORY WORKER who once owed a million euros was eventually settled. REUTERS.

This is a true story except for the last sentence. President PUTIN is very popular with an approval rating of more than 80 percent but under the Russian constitution, he cannot run more than twice in succession. So next year, when his term ends, he has appointed as his new Prime Minister, VICTOR SUBKOV. Apart from his age, 68, Subkov is known about him. He was an obscure anti-monopoly bureaucrat official but is a relative of the President. So is the head minister and the ministers of defense is his son-in-law. As PUTIN is bold and SUBKOV his a full head of hair, he will be nominated as "the best apparent," and will do what must be told. When high-ranking officials in the FBI-MA [Lower House] objected to the President postponing his duty, he said, "I tell PUTIN who ever I please."

A guy who lived in Khartoum
Took a lesbian up in his room
And they argued all night
Over who had the right
To do what, and with whom, and
to whom.

Normally, September is a bad month for investment in the U.S., but this year, thanks to a half point cut in the interest rate by the FED, the index rose 4.1 percent. However, I do not expect this to continue. The unemployment number for August shocked everyone but they are notoriously unreliable and the figure is soon to be revised. I do not anticipate another major drop in share but September and I would not be surprised if it is up by 50,000, or more. If this is correct, it would mean that the U.S. economy is still healthy and another cut next month, expected by 86 percent of futures traders, would not occur.

Traders and investors will be confused. On the one hand, it is good news for companies and profits; on the other hand, it will put the FED on hold for fear of raising inflation. Bush is gone in three years, so the market would prefer Mr. BEE on disappointment, especially as it is at such a high level, up 11 percent this year. BERNANKE will still feel that he made the right decision by cutting a half point but he would prefer to be more cautious in the coming months.

Every time he cuts the rate, the dollar weakens and if it is now 1.42 against the euro and 116 against the pound, the highest rate in 26 years, to a ledge against the ever-depreciating dollar, gold has risen to $750 an ounce, its highest since 1980, when it reached $850. Oprah is soon too happy even though the oil price is at a new high, and it is believed that they are selling some of their dollars to buy the euro and gold.

The United States has recorded 20 successive quarters of double-digit growth, a highly credible performance, for the second quarter, before the subprime mortgage problem appeared, analysts' expected year-on-year growth to decline to 0.8 percent. They were too pessimistic because the actual figure was 11.2 percent. For the third quarter just ended, they are confusing an increase of only 2.7 percent. Assuming that they are again overpessimistic, profits might increase by 6.7 percent but this would still be the first time in 5 years, that profits did not grow by 20 percent plus. The announcement season is just about to begin and over the next 3 weeks, most of the S&P 500 index companies will have reported. The real worry will be when companies announce profits commencing in 2008.

Personally, I do not think that the United States will go into a recession, in the past, the economy and companies have always proved more resilient than expected. Growth next year will almost certainly decline to 2 percent or slightly less but I doubt that it will turn negative. If I close, there will be further rate cuts and you will be able to fight your cigarettes with dollar bills. People with gold teeth will be unable to walk in the street for fear of being mugged.

Asian stocks rebounded to new highs, led by mining plays. BHP and RTZ. BHP is believed to have discovered a very large deposit of gold and also benefits from the record prices for coal. Commodity prices have been rising steadily and this continues to be an exciting sector. The Chinese 120 100 index has more than quadrupled over the past year to a new peak and the People's Bank of China's economic department has raised its forecast of annual growth from 10.8 percent to June to 11.6 percent to September. The Hang Seng market has been booming and the HANG SENG is over 27,000. In metals, zinc, copper and nickel have all improved in price.

The only country not recovering up to Asian standards is Japan, where the news is mixed. Industrial production is increased at the fastest pace in 4 years and spending rose by 1.6 percent but consumer prices have declined for the 7th month in succession so they have mild deflation, which is not good. Disposable income is decreasing, and the middle class is shrinking. Its contrast to China. Japan is important, as it is still the largest economy in Asia and second largest in the world.

Asian currencies have all been appreciating against the dollar, especially the rupee, yuan, Singapore dollar and the dongle. With the price at 46, I doubt that the central bank will cut by 50 basis points but might cut by 25 basis points on Thursday. The appreciation of the peso is causing havoc among call centers, who receive payment in dollars but whose expenses are mainly in peso. Banks are raising minimum salaries about 10 percent more call since 2008 when the rate was 58. It hurts exporters but keeps down inflation.

THE ZTE scandal dominated events in the Senate and I am also to understand how an honest politician like MIRIS, came to be a government, it comes as corruption started that the Philippines ranked third, and it proved costly. As for the case of doing business, Singapore came first and out of 60 countries, we came 47th. That earns it 4.

My wife was asked if she was socially active. "No", she said, "I just lie there."

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First Gen starts share buyback

POWER PRODUCER FIRST GEN Corporation said it started executing a program to buy back 50 billion worth of its own shares or 6 percent of the company's current issued capital.

First Gen said in a disclosure to the stock exchange that the buyback program will be carried out over a two-year period or until Dec. 30, 2009, subject to any extensions that may be determined by the firm's executive committee.

First Gen said it would undertake a buyback transaction with if the price per share is deemed "extremely undervalued," or when share prices are considered highly volatile or if the company believes that a buy back will result in enhancing shareholder value.

First Gen was up yesterday by P2.50 or 3.9 percent to P66 a share.

The company earlier disclosed that it would increase its capital stock to P3.65 billion from P1.05 billion through the creation of 260 million preferred shares with a par of P10/share.

First Gen also declared its intention to bid for the government's 40-percent stake in PNOC Energy Development Corp. [PNOC EDC] that is up for sale.

Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

Stocks up on mining gains

Pretongued B3

The composite index added 25.02 points to 3,597.92, off a high of 3,606.72, a total of 3.2 billion shares worth P4.1 billion were traded. Gainers overwhelmed decliners 84 to 23, 53 stocks were steady.

It was the second highest close since July 26, when it settled at 3,609.68. The broader all-share index rose 17.46 points to 2,244.37.

Major property developers were also in focus on hopes of a rate cut by local interest rates when the central bank holds its policy-setting meeting Thursday, and on the bullish outlook for the sector.

"Investors have been buying up properties in mining stocks because of rising commodity prices," said Jonathan Ravelas of Banco de Oro.

"But they are likely to continue a wait-and-see stance, especially since the third quarter earnings reporting season is around the corner," he added.

"I don't expect investors to move decisively until after the Oct. 4 meeting of the central bank," Ravelas said.

But Gemser Tan of Regina Capital Development Corp. said sell-offs without a rate cut, property stocks are unlikely to lose their appeal given their attractive valuation relative to the sector's growth potential.

He cited in particular the steady flow of remittances from overseas based Filipinos, amounting to at least a billion dollars every month, which are used to buy new homes.

"While there is some buying in some stocks, mainly there's consensus is that the overall market will remain as this," said Nora Lin of Standard Securities.

Philex Mining, the country's biggest and most profitable miner, was 20 centavos to P8.

Petron was up 20 centavos to P5.90. Megaworld surged 40 centavos to P3.05, while Ayala Land added 15 centavos to P16.50.

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RP reopens air talks with Singapore, N. Zealand

3rd-country code sharing remains a sticky issue

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE COUNTRY'S AIR PARIS IS gearing up for a new round of air rights negotiations with Singapore and New Zealand within the month.

The Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) said among the topics to be discussed were the regular Singapore-Clark and Auckland-Clark passenger flights.

CAB Deputy Director Patricia Poortenaar said that, during the talks to be held in the city-state, the Philippine air panel would ask Singapore to negotiate flights to and from Clark. This way, both the local airlines and Singapore tourists can move the Singapore-Clark route.

The Philippines could give airtraveler more choices and the airlines more competition.

As for the negotiations with New Zealand, the sticky issue is the NZ government's proposal for a third-country code sharing.

"The Philippines has no problem with code sharing, so long as it is bilateral. We don't want third-country rights thrown in," Poortenaar said the bilaterals.

"But it is a basic issue, [and] we are willing to sort it out, after all it is our first ASA with New Zealand."

The highlights of the ensuing ASA include regimes of unexercised rights to New Zealand and Philippine carriers to operate passenger and cargo flights in the Honolulu-Municipal International Airport-Clark.

Earlier, Poortenaar and other members of the air panel said the new government's multi-considerate progress during the negotiations on Sept. 6-7 as the New Zealand Ministry of Transport headquarters in Wellington, New Zealand.

The details of the next meeting have yet to be set.

The Philippine air panel is composed of representatives from the CAB, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Tourism, Department of Foreign Affairs, and domestic airlines.

Metrobank's ₱5-B bond offering gets Baa3 rating

By Doris C. Dumlao

GLOBAL CREDIT WATCHDOG Moody's Investor Service yesterday assigned an investment grade rating of Baa3 to Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.'s ₱5-billion 10-year bond offering.

Moody's rating scale may from a high of Aaa to a low of C, consisting of 21 notches. The scale is divided into two sections—investment grade and speculative grade. The lowest investment grade rating is Baa3.

"Moody's assigns the Metrobank offer the bank's dominant size, established brand name and healthy financial fundamentals. Also, the ratings are based on Moody's assurances that the systemic support probability for Metrobank is very high," the credit rating firm said in a statement.

Metrobank said it had begun its offering of tier 2 subordinated peso notes yesterday. The bond offering qualified as tier 2 or supplementary capital.

"The purpose of the offer is to increase and strengthen the bank's capital base," the bank said.

Million-peso question about PLDT

THE CROWD AT THE SENATE HEARING on the contract between China's ZTE and the DOTC has become thinner than my purse.

Last Thursday, only a handful of senators took part in it, perhaps because the topic was the technical issue on the national broadband network (NBN) project.

In between yawns, I gathered from the testimonies of IT Economics professors Emmanuel De Dios (the current dean) and Raul Fabella (former dean) that this country really has no need for the project.

For now, we already have broadband networks operated by the gigantic PLDT and by the little known outfit called IslandNet. That is a network operated by a consortium of other telecom companies.

The academicians opined that, instead of building the NBN, the government should just tap the existing backbones of these private firms.

Senator Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, who asked such an insightful question that the UP guys simply evaded it. Enrile wanted to know whether or not the UP School of Economics has any confirmation or conviction whatsoever with any of those private firms.

After harnessing and hearing the professors admitted they were doing a paper for the Center for National Policy and Strategy. The center of course gets funding from—what else—none other than PLDT. The study was about ₱1 million. No wonder!

***

Anyway, now that former Neda Secretary General Romulo Neri testified that the (ehe at the Palace, plus Vice Gentleman Miguel Arroyo, did not have any involvement in the alleged irregularities in the ZTE deal, perhaps he should also point out who among the Cabinet members were involved.

Come on, Neri said he was offered a ₱130-million bribe!

And mind you, the Cabinet approved the project.

The rush-million piso question is this: Who got the money then?

***

The five Filipino brand of mobile telephone is selling like... well, any other brand of mobile telephone, affects foreign ones. Meaning, the public is spending it

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bonoa III

as—i.e. it is fast!

The Filipino phone is called simply as "neptune," the brainchild of David Lim, president and CEO of publicly listed Solid Group.

Actually the "neptune" line of mobile gadgets is made in the Lim family's electronic factories in China, where David's father, Joseph Lim, has portrayed the family's electronics business into the second biggest mobile telephone maker in China, under the brand name "Amoy."

In ice Chinese characters, "Amoy" has a good connotation, but here in the Philippines, the anglicized term can be interpreted as "body odor."

And so David Lim simply changed the brand name for the Philippines, and luckily for both groups, the initial shipment did not last long at the store shelves.

Now, the phone's some-on may be in capability to operate true GSM cards as the same time, which is nothing new in the fast-changing mobile technology.

Similar Chinese brand dual-sim card mobile telephones have been available in Greenhills (San Juan) for a long time, although the public has not really used for them.

What makes "neptune" any different then? It is the back-up service, according to David Lim, which the Solid Group's service centers nationwide is providing.

And that's it! Methinks that the idea of having dual GSM tickles the Filipino psyche. You know—the double life of the Filipino man, for instance.

Don't get me wrong. I am not referring to those with two or even multiple families. I mean, really, we have an ex-example MMDA Administrator Bayani Fernando, who cox the metropolis' big boss by day and a singer by night.

***

One last topic to clear all small gas stations in Metro Manila, and perhaps even in the stock market, is the Galoc field in Palawan.

It seems that, with the high prices of oil, the Galoc field is being monitored.

Based on the public statement of the operator, Galoc Production Co., the field is supposed to have reserves of 18 million barrels of oil.

Over the major partners in the Galoc field, Nido Petroleum, is saying that the reserves should be around 25 million barrels.

That, mind you, is more than twice the figure quoted by the operator itself!

Okay, in the oil exploration business, the estimate keeps on changes, so two or three of reserves can never be the same.

But surely the difference cannot be so much as 100 percent!

Something must be afoot...Are the estimates being inflated to affect the stock market? Or are the estimates being deflated in not the payments of royalty to the government?

***

Calling the Department of Energy Pandy, we are getting confused!

***

Early this year, the Department of Education (DepEd) conducted the national career assessment examination or the NCAE for the first time.

Around 1.2 million fourth year high school students is more than 10,000 public and private high schools each is.

Surprise—the results showed that more than half of the graduating high school students were fit for careers other than those needing four-year college degrees!

Around almost 700,000 students graduating high schools for so-called technical-vocational programs.

In business, these human resources people surely would have given anything for those students to have gone to technical training instead of, say, taking up AB, after which the students could join every fast-food as mat-ons.

After all, the DepEd's idea behind the NCAE was for parents to look into career options for their kids, basing them on the kids' skills.

The NCAE for school year 2007-2008 was administered last Aug. 30 for some 1.3 million students. The results are expected in November this year. Hopefully, more kids will enroll in technical schools next year. Lino ini sure, though.

Congress urged to remove hybrid rice subsidy

By Amy R. Remo

A COALITION OF NONGOVERNMENT ORganizations has urged Congress to stop the inclusion of hybrid rice subsidy in the Department of Agriculture's 2008 budget.

In a statement, the New Watch and Action Network (NCN) said it was instead pushing for an increase of ₱150 million in the budget of Philippine Rice Research Institute to support organic farming, in light of increasing concern on agriculture's contribution to global warming.

"Congress should stand by its position in last year's budget hearing that this year would be the last for hybrid rice subsidy," Jovelyn Reyes-Cuenca, B1 land resource, said in a statement.

In the recent budget hearing on agriculture, however, Dinimaong Mangansay Ani rice director Nino Maldonan reported that the government's subsidy for each bag of 20 kilos of hybrid seeds is ₱1,000, B1 said.

Assuming that a hectare of rice land will need 1 bag of hybrid rice seeds, the government will have to spend ₱600 million for hybrid rice subsidy covering 500,000 hectares or only 12.5 percent of the total rice lands, Cuenca said.

Cuenca cited the 2007 World Bank report on the public expenditures of the Department of Agriculture, which found the huge possible amount of money and public human resources spent on hybrid rice Commercialization Program did not produce much net social benefit."

According to B1, the farmers' adoption of hybrid seeds has been slow, reaching peak coverage of 11 percent of total rice area in 2003.

In the meantime, B1 is pushing organic farming for a more sustainable agriculture and rice farming practices.

"Before everybody in the world condemns agriculture, organic farming may have the potential to reverse these trends and reduce carbon dioxide, remove some of the carbon dioxide already in the air," said Cuenca.

The World Food Summit reported that chemical farming, together with deforestation, is responsible for the 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions and 50 percent of nitrous oxide emissions worldwide.

Cuenca said lodging it under the Highest budget would facilitate easier and more transparent monitoring of expenses rather than integrating in the bulk money of the DA.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo with (left) Alfredo Yao and Aeroline Exports of Seair during the airline's inaugural flight from Cebu to Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur. PNA PHOTO

Seair expands operations, starts Cebu-Pagadian service

By Tarra Quismundo

PAGADIAN CITY—EXPANDING ITS ROUTE network beyond just leisure destinations, domestic carrier Seaborne Asian Airlines (Seair) has launched its Cebu City-Pagadian City service, bridging Visayas' premier city and Mindanao's emerging regional hub.

Seair's 32-seater Dornier 328 touched down for the first time at the Pagadian City airport in the morning of Sept. 17, landing on an airstrip in the middle of rice fields and grasslands.

The maiden flight was completed just an hour before President Macapagal-Arroyo and an entourage of cabinet members arrived in the city on board a Learjet for various activities around Zamboanga del Sur.

Seair president Avelino Zapanta said this was the company's contribution to the development of Mindanao.

Zapata said the Cebu-Pagadian flight was part of Seair's corporate social responsibility program, which also covered its Zamboanga City-Jolo and Zamboanga City-Tawi-Tawi services.

Becoming the only airline operating the route, Seair will go on flights from Cebu to Pagadian and back on Mondays and Fridays, Zapanta said. The airline is offering one-way flights for about ₱3,000.

Those coming from Manila may first take the hour-long flight to Cebu before embarking a connecting flight to Pagadian.

"There is much to bridge. There are the cultural differences... and the economic access, between main capitals like Manila and Cebu and communities like Pagadian," Zapanta said.

The new route aims to serve a silhouette of employees working in Pagadian-based regional offices of government agencies and natives commuting from the city to Luzon and Visayas.

"It would be very helpful to the city of Pagadian since we are now the center of Region 9 and this is the chance of [employees of regional offices. They don't have easy access to big cities like Cebu and Manila where they have to report from time to time," said Pagadian City Mayor Samuel Co.

The flights will also support Pagadian's aim of fulfilling the region's needed industry by next year said Co, as the city has been developing its one to destinations.

The province has also been working to upgrade its airport—from improving its modest terminal to repairing the runway to accommodate larger aircraft—to entice more travelers to visit the province.

The Cebu-Pagadian-Cebu route is Seair's 12th destination. The airline is in a fleet that includes prime tourist destinations such as Caticlan (Boracay), Busuanga and El Nido in Palawan, Camiguin, and its home base, the Clark Special Economic Zone.

Power firms can give 'special rates,' says ERC

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMmission is allowing power firms to offer "preferential rates" to their customers even without prior consent from the regulator.

In a Sept. 19 order, the regulatory body said it had, in previous decisions, ruled "the grant of preferential rates or qualified connection charges to be considered as a business decision."

While giving power firms this freedom, the ERC laid certain conditions they should be met when offering special rates.

The order stated that any revenue reduction on the part of distribution utilities, National Power Corp. and National Transmission Corp. as a result of providing preferential rates to their customers should not be recovered from or passed on to other clients.

Also, any losses that might be incurred by these power companies should not result in any form of cross-subsidy.

When giving preferential rates to a certain group of customers, the ERC said power firms should treat all similarly situated customers in the same way and give them the same privileges.

To ensure that this order would not result in any rate irregularities, the ERC has ordered Napocor, Transco and all distribution utilities to submit lists of customers that will be getting preferential rates.

These submissions would be done twice a year—on Jan. 15 and July 15—according to the order.

Power users in 14 industrial estates and three economic zones within the Manila Electric Co. franchise will soon be treated to lower power rates, following the issuance of this particular ERC order, as well as a letter from ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. to immediately implement special rates for these areas.

Albano said that even if Meralco and Napocor had yet to formally file with the regulatory body their agreement on preferential rates, they could already implement them.

Power, as much as almost ₱1 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) in the year 2010 months, economic harvests will enjoy a generation rate of only ₱3.32 per kWh, under the Meralco-Napocor agreement.

Napocor will provide up to 3,500 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of power at this low rate each year.

"If Meralco wants more, then we're more than willing to sit down with them again. The volume starts from 1,500 GWh to a maximum of 2,500 GWh," Napocor president Cyril Del Callar had earlier said.

Francisco said the special consumer rate could even go down to ₱3.49 per kWh and to ₱3.46 per kWh, if the demand volume goes up to a certain level.

BIR out to drastically cut ₱4.5B in receivables

Nido to undertake huge seismic program off Palawan

By Abigail L. Ho

MANILA OIL DRILLING activities at its Galoc service contract, that take's Nido Petroleum Ltd. will undertake its biggest seismic acquisition program ever, starting with Service Contract 54 off Northwest Palawan.

In a disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX), Nido managing director David Murby said the seismic data gathering program would involve a total of 5,000 line kilometers of 2D, and 600 square kilometers of 3D seismic data—"the largest ever undertaken in the history of the company."

The program would span service contracts 54, 58 and 63, all within the Northwest Palawan area, he said, and would utilize the services of GGC-Chinese seismic vessels MV Pacific Titan and MV Pacific Explorer.

For SC 54, he said the MV Pacific Titan would extend the 648-square-kilometer Bonkay 3D seismic survey by another 160 square kilometers "to ensure full coverage of the Petrotan Lead and the late Miocene Pag-Asa carbonate play fairway."

For SC 58, Murby said Nido and joint venture partner PNOC Exploration Corp. would use the MV Pacific Titan to gather 660 square kilometers of 3D seismic over four prospects.

The SC 59 2D and 3D seismic program will start late this month and will last until next January.

Authorities want to slash arrears by P500M a year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE plans to slash 40 accounts receivables from bank runs by at least ₱500 million each year as part of reforms to strengthen tax administration.

Based on official statistics, the BIR's arrears amounted as of end-August to ₱4.5 billion. This amount does not include those from the estate of former President Ferdinand Marcos, the tax-related cases of which were not assessed to be as high as ₱42 billion.

Under the national support for tax administration (NSTAR) reform program funded by the World Bank, the BIR has committed to reduce the account receivables and increase revenue by developing a better accounts receivables management system.

The BIR reported to the Department of Finance that the plan to annually cut the ₱500 million in receivables—including protested assessments—would lead to a significant reduction in the accounts arrears by 2011.

As to the Marcos estate, a task force was earlier created to reassess the unpaid arrears. BIR officials said the amount was still large. But it was not as much as the ₱42 billion assessment during the term of BIR Commissioner Jose Buñag.

A successful collection of the estate tax from the Marcoses is expected to boost revenue collection this year, making up for the shortfalls in the first semester last week.

In 2001, the BIR issued the Marcos family the following tax assessments: Estate tax worth ₱22.3 billion, as well as deficiency in income tax against the former president and his wife Imelda Marcos worth ₱384.15 million for the tax years 1986-1987.

Two years later, the SC sent notices of finality to previously contested the Marcoses. Some lots were placed on auction, but the properties failed to attract bidders and thus reverted to the government.

Aside from raising money from the privatization of government assets, the DOF is pursuing some additional initiatives to raise additional revenue this year.

The NSTAR project aims to assist the BIR in overcoming taxpayer compliance by improving efficiency and effectiveness, and enhancing its capacity to undertake sustainable and long-term administration reform programs.

In France, mini fuel pumps soon to adorn homes

By Corrie Salazar-Mariano

WANT TO GAS UP AT HOME with your own mini refueling station?

This may not be such a far fetched idea anymore. Some countries have started to adopt this technology in support of efforts to encourage people to shift to natural gas fuel vehicles for cleaner environment.

Mentioned in an exhibition during the 2007 Gas Conference in Paris held last month were a mini home compressed natural gas refueling station—only about double the size of a traditional diesel breaker—and a prototype of a computerized natural gas-fuel Toyota Prius II. Both were demonstrations of Gaz de France, a major player in Europe's natural gas arena.

Gaz de France's mini home refueling stations may have set of necessary France, like several other European countries, has decided to go full blast in the promotion of natural gas not only for power generation but also for transport fuel.

Conventional

But unlike Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Austria, France does not have a dotted of public pump stations for natural gas, although oil companies and distributors committed to install at least 360 natural gas filling stations between now and 2010.

A MODEL shows how the mini natural gas pump works. Above: twice the size of an ordinary circuit breaker is a meter at home (inset). The pump may yet become a permanent fixture in garages across France.

This plan formed part of the undertaking entered into in 2000 by members of the French Association for Natural Gas Vehicles. Under the agreement, vehicle manufacturers will develop four-seater car models. The government will then provide a government tax incentive, while Gaz de France will establish conditions that will lead to the adoption of a home refueling system.

In line with this commitment, Gaz de France started offering home natural gas packages, but only to consumers whose homes were connected to existing natural gas network. The mini gas refueling station was somewhat additional.

The mini station—which compresses the gas to 200 bar, equivalent to the pressure of air in a utility driver's air cylinder—may be installed by trained personnel in a private garage, garden or driveway. It is checked regularly by technicians, and is guaranteed by Gaz de France.

Once the unit is set up, fixed to a wall and connected to the gas network, all the customer needs to do is to connect the refueling nozzle to the car and press the "on" button. It automatically stops operating when the tank is full. A fill less than will need about three hours of refueling.

A customer pays a basic monthly charge of ₱9 euros for the equipment and home refueling service, plus the cost of the gas consumed. Under the Gaz de France package, natural gas fuel costs 0.56 euro per cubic meter, equivalent to a liter of 95 octane super gasoline. That, according to the company, is about 50 percent less than the price of gasoline and 40 percent lower than that of diesel.

Perks

While vehicle makers, gas distributors and energy companies in France provide all the necessary tools that will encourage people to shift to natural gas as transport fuel, the French government maintains the perks and throws in tax incentives both to individual and corporate users.

A 2,000-euro tax credit is given to an individual user at the time of the original purchase of a natural gas-fueled vehicle. The amount goes up to 3,000 euros if the purchase of the natural gas-fuel car is accompanied by the destruction (by an authorized agency) of a petrol-fueled prime, car registered before Jan. 1, 1997 (must acquired at least 13 months prior to the date of destruction.

Companies shifting in vehicles operating solely or partially on natural gas get tax exemptions on the purchase of the units and are allowed a 100 percent recovery of value-added tax on fuels.

THE TOYOTA Prius—still not to run on natural gas

Peso seen firming up to 43:$1 ...

From page B1

(43.50 by next year and settle at 39:$1 by end-2008.

To counteract where growth is weakening, said Arjobleza, poor cash as Thailand—more investment rate cuts are expected. He argued the Thai baht to appreciate too, as weaker growth, lower rates and an expansive currency favor other Asian currency plays," BBP Pardhan said.

The peso and the baht tended closely against the US dollar before the Asian currency turmoil of 1997. But while Thailand was the epicenter of the currency turmoil that triggered a regional capital flight, the peso has lagged the baht since then.

BSP Pardhan' forecast is a turnaround upward for the peso closer to the pre-Asian crisis levels. Prior to the sharp currency devaluation since 1997, the peso traded on the 26:$1 level.

The commentary written by BSP Pardhan analyst Chin Goo Thio, recommended that investors may "long" or buy investment from currencies including the peso throughout this year and next year.

Aside from the peso, BSP Pardhan' other top currency picks for the next two years were the Malaysian ringgit, Singapore dollar. Chinese yuan and the Indonesian rupiah.

"The continued rapid pace of foreign exchange reserve accumulation...such the exemption of countries such as Taiwan and Indonesia which deserve share monitoring—is encouraging at a time when there are fears of foreign capital repatriation from emerging markets," Thio research said.

"Indeed, flows showing that investors see Asia as a safe haven play arises in investors' confidence in the region, underpinned by solid economic growth, strengthening domestic demand, still competitive exports, better policy and attractive earnings potentials," it added.

The Philippines yielded a record-high BOP surplus of $6.1% billion from January to August this year on robust inflows from overseas Filipinos and foreign investors, based on the latest data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. The rising BOP reflected the strong build-up in the gross international reserves, which breached the $30 billion mark in mid-August.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the local economy and the rest of the world.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP), the most closely watched economic indicator which rates up all goods and services produced by the local economy, grew by 7.3 percent in the first semester to hit its strongest in 28 years.

BSP Pardhan said the credit headwinds triggered by rising delinquencies among US subprime mortgage credit, or home-buying loans given to borrowers with imperfect credit history and little equity, had a limited fallout in Asia as risk appetites for Asian assets remained strong.

Exports to New Zealand up 25%

By Jerry E. Rivera

PHILIPPINE AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS to New Zealand reached $2.5 million in June, up 25 percent from the $2 million recorded in the same month last year, said the Department of Agriculture.

In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap, New Zealand Ambassador David Prue said the "largest rise was in the value of bananas and pineapple."

Based on data from the National Statistics Office, exports of fresh bananas to New Zealand increased by 168 percent to $900,000 from last year's $336,000.

"There were also significant improvements in the sales of durian, figs, pineapples and avocados," Prue wrote in his letter to Yap.

Exports of fresh pineapples in June meanwhile grew by 109 percent to $1,68,000 from last year's $446,870.

Prue likewise congratulated Yap, Agriculture Undersecretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat and Ambassador Domini Soo "for this remarkable trade performance."

"We cannot be sure how much of the improvement is directly due to the success of Presidential Mangga-Y initiative earlier this year," Prue continued in his letter. "But the increase is too large to be sanctioned to the hard work that you (Yap), Undersecretary Puyat and Ambassador Soo put into the promotion of Philippine agriculture."

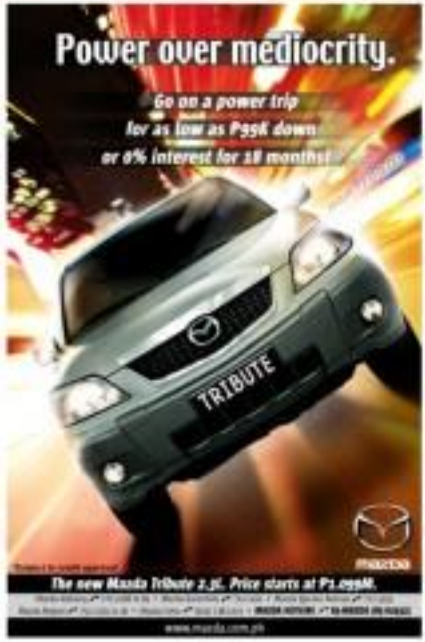
As of June this year, nine New Zealand-based companies have expressed interest pledged to buy over 100 million worth of Philippine fresh and processed agro-fishery products.

This was a result of the product exhibition and selling mission conducted by the DA during President Macapagal-Arroyo's recent state visit to the southwestern South Pacific country.

According to Puyat, New Zealand buyers sail: he importing mangoes, bananas, pineapples, dried mangoes, banana chips, dehydrated coconut, canned sardines, ready-mix mixes, dried anchovies and fish products, fruit juices in cartons packs, spices (chili and tamarind), fruit-coconut and fresh coco juice.

The DA has likewise entered into a partnership with one of the biggest health food companies, Sanitarium Health Food Co., for the sale of Philippine fresh and processed fruits and fruit products.

BUSINESS



RP-Japan deal pushed

TAMBUNTING

Jpepa seen to jack up investments, exports

By Bernie W. Dominguez

TRADE OFFICIALS TESTIFYING said the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement could pave the way for the inflow of P363 billion in additional investments and contribute another P720 million in export revenues to the country.

Trade Undersecretaries Thomas G. Aquino and Elmer C. Hernandez said so yesterday as they heard a five-year export promotion plan aligned with the Jpepa's implementation.

Aquino told reporters that exporters—most of which were small and medium enterprises—would benefit from the elimination of duties on 720 tariff lines. "These products include those that already have a high share in Japan's total imports," the chief trade negotiator said.

He was referring to certain marine products, fruits and nuts, animal or vegetable fats, preparations of meats and seafood products, beverages and spirits, mineral fuels and oils, plastics, wood products, cotton, clothing, and zinc.

Aquino said duties on 66 other tariff lines would be gradually lowered, resulting in additional export revenues of $86 million for the Philippines.

Aquino said that in the course of the Jpepa talks, Tokyo had offered to fix at zero four out of five tariff lines from a total of 7,476 tariff lines traded with Japan.

These include 6,510 lines that are already "locked in," meaning that duties are permanently zero to long as the Philippines and Japan agree to keep the pact.

At the same time, duties on 19 percent of tariff lines would be gradually removed.

Hernandez said that the Department of Industry's investment leads showed that the ratification of Jpepa would "provide Japanese companies a higher level of comfort that could lead to their decision to invest."

The investment leads, which Hernandez picked up to P363 billion from the previous P211 billion, covered projects in 11 sectors.

Also joining the Bureau of Export Trade Promotion said he prepared five-year plan consisting of four major activities—trade fair and exhibitions, in-store promotion and inbound and outbound business matching.

"With the actual performance of these activities yielding about $11 million in export sales in 2006, this amount can be tripled under the Jpepa," the BETP said in a statement.

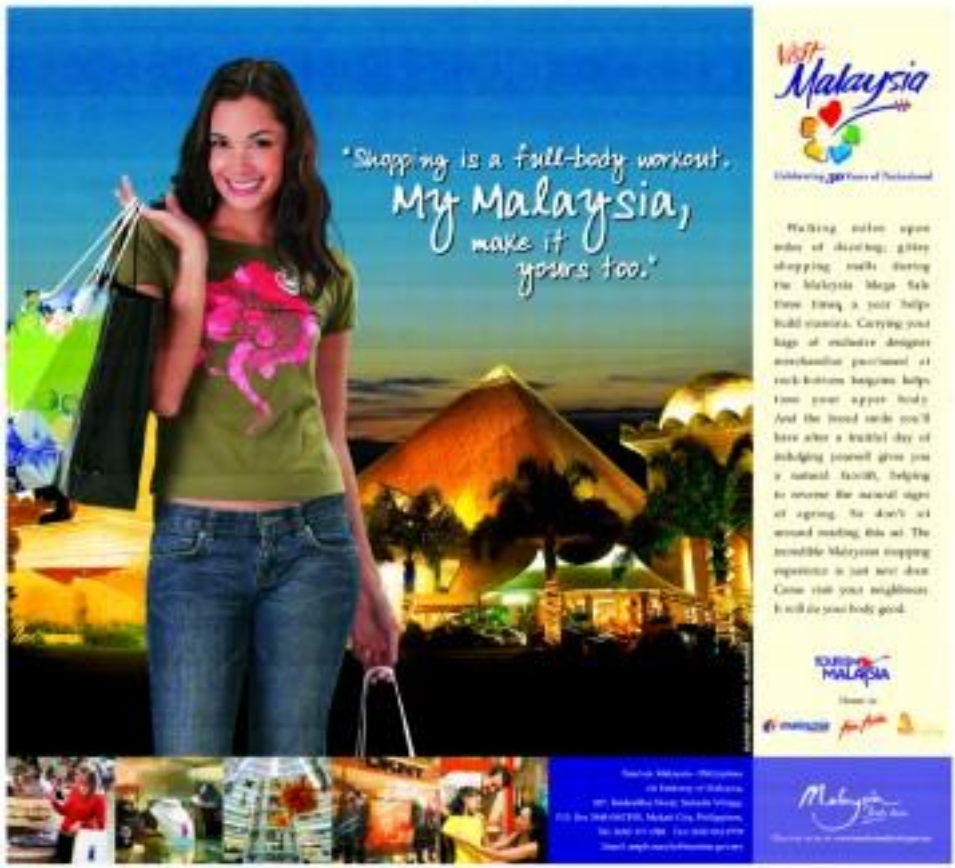
SME 'enablement' proposed in Apec

AMBASSADOR JESUS P. TAMBUNTING, chair and CEO of Planters Development Bank—the country's largest private SME development bank, proposed a new development approach called "SME enablement" for industrializing economies during the Apec Business Advisory Council SME Summit held in Melbourne.

The SME Summit, a pre-event to the Apec Economic Leaders meeting, was attended by senior business leaders and policy makers from across the Asia Pacific region.

Tambunting said the growth of globally competitive small and medium enterprises could not be sustained unless leaders were prepared to support outcomes by integrating finance with SME-oriented technology support infrastructure and capacity-building.

Pioneer thrusts has put this SME "enablement" in practice by opening the first SME industrial park to the Philippines.



A biker's life—sort of

Text by Anne A. Jamison
Photos by August dela Cruz

COMMIT OR QUIT, I relentlessly chanted.

My hand rested as I perched my bike on the edge of a 20-foot-vertical mudslide drop-off. The rugged slope of jagged rocks and pebbles threatening to cut my limbs if I made the wrong move. As more experienced riders gleefully tackled the course like children let loose in a toy store, I knew I had to make a quick decision. The two, after all, are race.

When in a quandary, especially on a morning machine bike a mountain bike, you don't quit halfway, especially not while you're negotiating a steep drop-off. Where you commit to the sport, you commit it hundred percent with a devil-may-care abandon. You have to be one with the mountain, feel the earth beneath your body and move along with its bumps and drops.

Easier said than done! As my heart raced with fear and excitement, I decided that, no, I'm just not into commitment. With continued on the handlebar and the bike on my frame, I carried my bike down the slope, my face common red in shame.

Yes, I chickened out. What can I say? It was my first time.

Reality check

When I received an invitation to join a 24-hour mountain bike endurance race from a coworker, my eyes lit up with foolish romantic-chivalrous. I felt the same sensation when I took up the challenge to "bike in the skies" from Baguio to Sagada, to conquer Mount Ulap, where I hadn't the faintest idea where it was.

I guess, really how could can resist "biking in the skies"? Sounds like a lovely ride, doesn't it? Reality check is never kind, for when you get there you have to do peak after peak of staggering uphill rides that will send your quads shivering and burning like crazy. Your nerves have broken. Couple that with your sky-exploring heart rate and shallow breathing and, trust me, you won't even have time to enjoy the picturesque view of the environment.

So of who not except to say this that I promptly said yes to the 24-hour race before I could even think of the consequences. With fearless sister actor Agnes Espinosa and Spousal freedom reporter Charles Rubin in my companion, I knew I was in the company of two of

ANSWERS ON

Your Doctor Knows Best

Antonio R. Villalon MD, FPCP, FPSMO

Question:

I have noted a lump in my breast since three months ago. Is it breast cancer?

Doctor Says...

The breast body is made up of different cells like complex tissues, forming organs like the breast. Unnecessary cells grow and divide to replace dead or injured cells. Cancer may arise when we have abnormal cells growing in an uncontrolled way. When these happen in the cells in the breast, these may lead to breast cancer.

Breast cancer affects many women, with very few cases diagnosed early and worldwide. Almost all breast cancers occur in women but they can also affect men.

The cause of most breast cancer is yet to be identified. Many factors are considered as contributors in the development of breast cancer. The occurrence of breast cancer is increased in families with a family member or relative diagnosed with breast cancer. The increased risk can be passed down to the next generation. Likewise, the presence of breast cancer genes is the increased in persons with more exposure to estrogen hormones because these cells will multiply more than the rate of cell proportion. Also, the use of hormonal therapy, known also as hormone replacement therapy. Dietary factors like increased consumption of animal fat and protein coupled with a diet low in fiber may also play a role in the development of breast cancer as well.

The most common presenting symptom of breast cancer is a tumor or lump. Other signs and symptoms include changes in breast shape and size, bleeding from the nipple, skin dimpling or puckering of the skin, and changes in the breast nipple or areola. Changes in breast tissue may also appear as part of the breast lump in the armpit. It is important to note that all breast lumps are cancerous. In fact, majority of breast lumps are benign – non-painful or spreading to other parts of the body. Most lumps occur in the younger age group and they are usually associated with a fibrocystic condition. Conversely, in older age group, it is important to determine if the lump is malignant (capable of spreading to other parts of the body).

Your doctor is best to determine if the lumps you have is cancerous or not. He will do a complete evaluation by getting a detailed medical history and doing a breast examination. He may also order imaging studies like mammography (X-ray of the breast) or ultrasound and perform tissue biopsy, a small sample of the breast lump is obtained and viewed under the microscope. Please consult your doctor for more information on these procedures.

Treatment of breast cancer will vary depending on the presentation of each patient. Removal of tumors with through surgery is often done. The large tumors are usually removed (lumpectomy) or the whole breast (mastectomy). Treatment may also include giving medicines for patients with cancer cells given by chemotherapy. Exposing natural to radiation is radiation therapy and giving medicines that block the effects of estrogen, thus stopping or slowing cancer cell growth (hormonal therapy). It is important that the patient and parent is timely take partnership with the doctor in the breast cure team.

Early detection of breast cancer increases the chances of cure. For proper guidance, evaluation, and management, please consult our clinic.

Dr. Villalon is an Attending Medical Oncologist, Medical Consultant at the Philippine General Hospital. Dr. Villalon is also an Professor at the University of the Philippines, College of Medicine.

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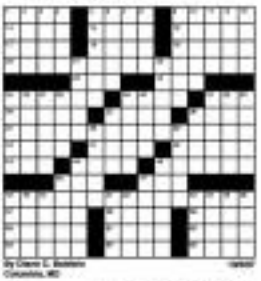
A daily serial by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNIEL A. JO ETRIA

DAILY CROSSWORD



CONCEPTIS SU DOKO

Conceptis Sudoku

	7		1	4				
6		2						
	4	1	8		6			
8		7				9		
2				1				5
		9				1		7
			5		3	2	8	
						6		4
				6	7		5	

Difficulty Level ★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKO

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

HOROSCOPE

QUALIBET CRUSADERS. Christine Bersola-Babao with daughter Antonia, Pinky Yap, lawyer Ernest Maceda, Gina de Venecia, Pinky Tobiano, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Sara Soliven De Guzman, Ambassador Jose S.R. Antonio, Ambassador Ernesto Maceda, lawyer Gigi Martinez (Sen. Loren Legarda's representative) and Dr. Alejandro Olivan (Jose Ledesma's representative)

Tribute to crusaders

LESTER Nadig

MINTE Gloria

AMBASSADOR Ernesto Maceda

ROD Cornejo

BETH Mendoza

LUCIENNE De Tinco

AMBASSADOR Ernesto Maceda with wife Rica and son Mac

CLAUDINE Dalisay and Emily Lopez

When the evening began, there were only 18 Crusaders. By night's end, Qualibet had all its guests sharing in its CEO and founder Pinky Pe Tobiano's vision of a "safer, better Philippines." Indeed, what could be better than a roomful of health and safety consultants?

Qualibet recently paid tribute to its 18 Crusaders in a capacity filled event at The Loft at Matanzas in the Rockwell Center.

Qualibet's crusaders include Jose G. Ledesma, president and CEO, St. Luke's Medical Center; Pinky T. Yap, marketing director, Goldilocks; House Speaker Jose de Venecia; Sen. Loren B. Legarda; Ambassador Ernesto M. Maceda; Ambassador Jose Eduardo R. Antonio; Sara Soliven de Guzman, EVP, GSI Montessori; lawyer Ernest P. Maceda, law dean, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila; Christine Bersola-Babao, pioneering advocate; and Gina Lisa Perez de Venecia, founder, Isa Pa Foundation.

Tobiano, a chemist and cancer survivor who established Qualibet in July 2006 to fill a need for world-class food, seven pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and veterinary testing facilities, lauded the crusaders for taking up the cudgels for her advocacy.

"I am thankful that I am not alone in this advocacy of mine," said Tobiano. "All I'm fighting for is consumer empowerment in the Philippines. I want the quality of the water we use, the generic medicines that are being sold, and the safety we have about the food out in the market."

House Speaker De Venecia praised Tobiano for her advocacy. "She is fighting for something that has a lasting impact. She is the only one who came up with this crusade. As her adoptive father, I am very proud of her."

Christine Bersola, the Bodega and the Company provided the entertainment for the evening.

ALEX Gonzaga and Rosa Sor Ebersole OH Sandbox

RAMON Ortiz

FDP Agoto

ALGIERO Park, Anya Camacho, Alicia Romero, Pinky Tobiano, Gigi Leonardo, Ryan Rex Cabrera, Hope Lazzaro, Jocelyn Cobado and Greg Montano

DINA Tio, Sunny Chua, Ruby Chua, Pinky Tee and Clin Chua

TONY Katigbak

BETH Mendoza, Ferdi Salvador and Michelle Peralta

GILLETTE Ayson

LAWYER Gigi Martinez and Dr. Alejandro Olivan

ROSEMARIE "Baby" Arenas, Hilda Antonio and Ambassador Jose E.R. Antonio

BIBI Yu, Princy Hanson and Marites Chanyungco

Mayan calendar prophecies

INNER AWARENESS
Arlene Licayan

I AMEND THE MESSIES OF channels of three spirit entities if the predictions in the Mayan calendar were true.

The responses affirmed the predictions would transpire and humankind better prepare for them.

The following was the answer of Gabbey, the spirit guide of Jun Augustine, a professor of business management in Pangasinan. I believe Gabbey is the Archangel Gabriel.

Jun: Ninny Licayan would like to know if the Mayan calendar prediction that the earth's cycle would be finished by Dec. 21, 2012, is accurate.

Gabbey: The end of this cycle is near. Actually, no one knows when this will happen except God himself. The predictions and declarations are approximations. However, there are indicators that the time is near. Usually, the end of a cycle is preceded by great calamities. Many new kinds of calamities, new kinds of wars, and new cultures will come out which are beyond your expectations.

But do not be deceived, as Christ said in the Bible, for new false prophets will emerge. These people are very charismatic and possess special powers that would even acclaim the fruits shown by Christ.

A: But why should God allow these things to happen? If He loves humankind, He should not allow these to occur. Otherwise, Christ's mission of saving the world would be in vain.

G: These things happen because of man's irresponsibility. Many religious personalities appeared in your world showing the way to righteousness but man has not learned his lessons. The world must be cleansed for a new generation to rectify the mistakes of the past.

End times?

A: So, are we living now in the end times as mentioned in the Apocalypse of St. John?

G: You must understand my friend that, contrary to what you know, time is relative... in the sense that time as a measurement of duration is dependent on a particular cycle. If you refer to your cycle now, then I would say it is near the beginning of an end of a cycle. But another cycle will come and so other time will be set.

A: How many years are there in a cycle?

G: I just told you that time is relative to a cycle. You cannot take the time of one cycle as a standard to measure the duration of another cycle.

Actually, a cycle is a way of expressing the series of related events in the world. But, in the spiritual realm, there is no such thing as a cycle for in the spirit world there is oneness and in eternity, there is no time. But the messengers of God have to make things understandable to man and therefore cycles were created. Seven major cycles are to be initiated before the Parousia. You are now in the 6th cycle and that cycle is about to end.

A: What is a Parousia?

G: This is what you call the Second Coming of Christ, which is misunderstood even by the Church.

Parousia

A: So, what is the correct understanding of Parousia?

G: If you read the Bible, it says Christ will come back the way he departed. A literal translation has been made... by Church leaders. The coming back of Christ will not really be the way he departed. Logic will tell you that this is not possible simply because the Second Coming will happen in a different earth and therefore the world environment at the time will not be the same.

You see... even if Christ will come today, (time) is not the same as... when he was here about 2,000 years ago. So, how can he come back the way he departed?

A: If Christ left the world by ascending into heaven, then he would come back descending from heaven. This is what is taught in catechism.

G: That is not accurate. By ascending you assume that heaven is up beyond the clouds... heaven is not a place but a state of the soul or spirit. It is another dimension which does not need space and time. Going up is only a manifestation of separation from one dimension to another... a soul of a person who passed well also ascend not because it will go to heaven but because the soul, which is now free from the physical laws, especially the law of gravity, will float and enter into another dimension, the spiritual dimension.

A: But... Christ ascended with a physical human body. A soul of a dead person is pure spirit and has no body.

G: Christ at that time had a glorified body. Even the Bible said so. A glorified human body is one where spiritual characteristics... The Bible narrated how Christ just appeared in the midst of the apostles one of nowhere. That was a manifestation of a glorified body. So, when Christ went to heaven, which is actually going to the spiritual dimension, he was not ascending because that is the way of going to another dimension.

A: So, where is the second coming?

G: Only God really knows. What is true is that all seven cycles must be attained first... That is the divine plan. But how soon it will come, no one knows except God.

For inquiries on Inner Mind Development, ESP and Intuition Development, and Andamen, Karma & Reincarnation conduct of by this writer, call 8130283, 8926886, fax 8159880, e-mail innerawareness_2005@yahoo.com.ph.

THE BASILIO CLAN: Paolo B. Antonio, Sto Nombre Maria B., Ina B. Antonio, the celebrant, Bert, and Pablo Basilio III, (standing) Brian Antonio, Ramona B. Antonio, Irene Basilio, Gay Basilio, Martin B. Tan, Princess Basilio and Edwin Basilio

MARY Antonio, Kim Lobo, Tessie Reniega, Linda Cruz and Cini Ramos

ALICE Briones, Helen Ong and Lucy Tyquin

NOEL Gonzales and Pitang Thompson singing for the celebrator

Birthday party will help build town's cultural center

MIGUEL Zubiri and his wife, Nona Gotiangco with Emam's columnist gal, Jollie Carvalho

LANNY and Dante de Leon with Rico Camacho

JOHN Chua, Baloo and Paulie de los Santos

ITO Cuesta, Robert Miller and Marissa Garcia

LITO and Tina Santos

CIVIC MINDED MOT Basilio turned his regular, well, extended 75th birthday bash into a fund-raising affair for the "improvement and beautification of the town plaza of Pinkamundo, Nueva Ecija," hometown of his wife, civil-world socialite Ronnie Tan.

In lieu of gifts, he requested his invitees to donate to the Pinkamundo Civic and Cultural Foundation ——— town to spend funding the conversion of the town plaza into a proper venue for civic, social and cultural affairs, pulongpulong.

On behalf of the celebrator, fashion-plate Nenia thanked all the guests from the Rotary Inner Wheel, Kiwanis and Catholic Women's clubs, and the Friends of the Cultural Concerns of the Philippines (FOCP) for their donations and assured them that proceeds would be used solely for the project.

By the time mot lowered into the Moët Perfect Bralkin, which is becoming the most popular place for receptions and events, the place was packed, dahlings.

The dinner-dance then got rolling with live musical numbers by close pals Pitang Thompson, Noel Gonzales, and Elmer Griggon and, a special gift from friend Father Ulad, a performance by mime Jonathan Endon, no less.

It was followed by ballroom dancing, mind-ing the social no-nothing and rolling on the dance floor.

Truly a fun birthday for a worthy cause, pulongpot.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcy

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare

User-friendly

Nokia unleashed the fabulous, user-friendly and easy-to-use new Nokia 6500 Classic, pulongpot. Indeed it was a cause for celebration in this model given you a multimedia computer, a media player, a navigation camera, MP3 player and GPS device. It can access e-mail, surf the Internet, share photos and movies, upload files to Flickr and more, would you believe, help you find your way around town with the GPS feature. Wow is all we can say, pulongpot.

Mel dashed in late-ish from another happening, dahlings, but not too late to witness Nokia, together with Smart, limbing celebrating the amazing features of the Nokia 6500.

The fun dinner was hosted by popular businessman Rene Sy, fiancée at his pre-wedding Ayala Alabang residence. Its attendees were Smart's honcho

AMBASSADOR Victor Garcia and his wife, +Precious Cosio S.

PITOY Moreno and Joel Cruz

EDU Lanuza and Tess Celdy

MANILA'S Fire Lovelines 2006: Maria Veronica Rosero, Jean Fernando, Rosanna Rivera, Jeane Catherine Nepomuceno and Cristina Abadia

LOVE 14 Foundation officers and members: Donnie Ramirez, Rocy Purgal-Ilo-Ilos, Cielo Cuenca, Rivera Purgal-Ilo-Ilos, Yelly Reyes, Joanne Mendiondo, Constance Jocson, Nes Valdez, Jenny Nepomuceno and Nes Lizares

MANILA'S Fire Lovelines 2007: Jill Bonagsan, Charlene Abalos, Mila Zamora, Tea Villar and Glenna Jabao

Manila's loveliest

Hey, it is only two months away from Christmas and we will be sending out our calling cards, fren, for to be exact, pulongpot.

Who are they? Well, the Love 14 Foundation has announced Manila's Fire Lovelines 2006. Now on its 10th year, the search is a major component of the foundation "that aims to raise funds for its various charity projects."

The five pretty pretty young gals were named during the Mooning with the Stars Ball, hosted by Jenny Napoles, president of the foundation, at the Pasilio Plaza function hall.

Carla Rosanna Arenas, Cristina Abalos, Maria Veronique Dapit Rosero, Jean Solongo Fernando and Jeane Catherine Lim Napoles emerged as their parents Joel and Becky Arenas' Edwin and Carmen Abalos, Marcelo and Jacqui Rosero, engineer Jesse and Elizabeth Fernando, and Johnny and Jenny Napoles beamed with pride, dahlings.

"The proclamation of Manila's Fire Lovelines rekindles the commitments of Love 14 Foundation to the mentoring in dedication and determination to serve and to fulfill the mission of love. The foundation continues to make contributions in the delivery of health and social services, especially education, through its scholarship grants," explained dedicated chair Noi Lizares, no less, dahlings.

Mark the date, pulongpot. Dec. 17, at the Rizal Grand Ballroom, Makati Shangri-La Hotel, the start of the five pretty pretty gals' year of fame.

SMART's Pride Hotzprize flanked by Nokia's Sandeep Khanna and Siegfried Karlsson

JUN and Coty Mesa

SULTRY songstress Yeng Vega kept the lovelines on the edge of their seats

GMA Bureau-ent Susan with host Boobsie, Yuuuna and Glaiza de Castro

Weight-loss story can win trip to HK

IF YOU ARE A SUCCESSFUL Kando Block and Bura user, tell your story in Goodbye Flab, Hello Slid-quino.

A joint project of Kando and Mega magazine, it is open to all Kando users with a successful weight-loss story to tell. Stories on how the dietary supplement helped you achieve your ideal weight.

Send your entry to Kando. It should be accompanied by full-body before and after (using Kando photos). Include name, age, address, contact numbers and the original tape receipt of a Kando Block and Bura product purchased Sept. 1 to Nov. 30.

Deadline for submission is Dec. 28. Entries must be mailed to Orthotative Inc., Unit 2B City Center Building, Ortigas Ave. Greenhills, San Juan City.

The panel of judges is composed of representatives from Kando marketing group and Mega magazine. Entries will be judged on editorial content (60 percent) and the result's overall appeal before and after taking Kando Block and Bura (40 percent).

Winner wins a three-day, two-night trip to Hong Kong for two (package covers airfare, hotel accommodation and US$1,000 pocket money), Kando gift products, a one-year Mega magazine subscription, and a makeover and pictorial feature for its February issue.

Non-winners can join the raffle promo on Dec. 14 at the Performance Studio, Greenhills, where iPod Nanos, Nokia 6070s, Kando 3B packs and Mega magazine subscriptions, like smart and PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno, Smart's marketing head, Infinity Business group head, beauty and mass Jollie Carvalho and Nokia account manager Ivy Ornos Tenalind.

The salu-salo dinner catered by Bellevue hotel, no less, had the most huge garden looking like a jungle with tons of flower arrangements everywhere you looked.

The program was, as always, excellently hosted by "mr. et la-dare pa" Johnny Litton, and he (he-she) is dash of class.

The fantastic, one-of-a-kind singer Yeng Vega entertained the audience with her ultra-mobile vocal range by performing several hot jaw-rom-

HEALTHY eating tips and latest treatment and alternative remedies to diseases and social ills are featured in the special September-October issue of the Healthy Options Lifestyle News Digest. As part of ushering in its 12th anniversary, the digest shares a commemorative on the opening of new Healthy Options stores at 3rd Floors in QC and at 3M City Diners. The issue also features stories on new skin care treatment and the psychological battles young girls with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) face, as well as on anti-aging quiz. Copies of the latest Healthy Options Lifestyle News Digest are free with purchase at all Healthy Options stores in major malls in Metro Manila, Clark in Pampanga, Sta. Rosa, Laguna, Cebu and Davao. Visit the Healthy Options website: www.healthyoptions.com.ph.

DON'T PANIC. Hikers navigating sudden drop-offs, not for the faint-hearted

MORE than 200 participants joined the 24-hour mountain bike endurance race.

A biker's life—sort of

Front page 61

INQUIRER's Brent Jarabelo...

...figured for the first time by the Department of Tourism, the race was held at the Sentosa Hill Palawan Hideaway Swaray Land Reserve in Buenlahyap on a 6-km circuit. Compromised by Phil Cyclopia, Rizal's Filanoy Pierce, the City of Montalbapo and the National Biking Persons, the tournament attracted bikers by Finish a minimum of 15 laps each, whether in a relay team of three or as solo racers, within a span of 24 hours.

The tournament was open to amateur and elite riders whose mountain biking skills were just at the level to the route included steep descents/ascents, tricky single tracks, hour-stopping sudden drop-offs and a "bonus" rough ride through a construction site on uneven dirt of loose sand and soft earth that, no races in comparisons dropped by evening, instantly turned to a slippery mix of mud and slush.

GIRL POWER. Women steered their, too, can tough it up when the going gets rough.

TIPPING POINT. As the race neared its end, this biker falls to the ground in full display of good sportsmanship.

Excited first-timer

My first-timer like me and my teammates, it was the sheer promise of fun and adventure that lured us into the race. And in many of us quickly found out, the challenge was really about how far you could push yourself for 24 hours and overcome unpredictable obstacles thrown your way—scratching ass and acid darkness not included. (Save for the teeny light from your head and bike lamps, you had to ride in complete darkness during nightfall. Could be creepy, depending on how you interpret it. But let's get to that later.)

The first few times I lolled I counted with ease, but after being knocked off my bike one too many times I lost track. Well, there was the one time when, during a dark moment that saw my bike veering toward the sky I lost my balance, fell on my back and melted my brain (pranking, of course, that I still had one after several jarring maneuvers).

Another memorable one happened way past midnight when a huge toad—I had never seen one this big before—jumped right in front of me and I fell on my side, the pedal hitting my ankle hard.

Ouch! Oh, My. God. That hurt so much it was my one moment of humorous go-lucky and take-it-long-warm-fuzzy-right-now. I stifled a cry, seriously, and for the first time wondered what on earth I was doing there with my life. I was tired, aching and shivering. I hadn't slept and showered. My body ached for the comforts of home. I missed my bed, my pillows, my dog, the kitchen, the bathroom. Hadn't even missed the drama of Anywhere but here, please.

But when I was pitch dark, adrenaline shot up my veins as I scrambled up on my feet, propelled by fear of what nocturnal creatures might come walking, jumping, flying or slithering across my line of vision. Because save for the metal by grinds of chains against sprockets of metal arms being pushed and pulled by my feet, of gears shifting and of my own heavy breathing (I have two types of heart condition, by the way—atrial rate prolapse and rheumatic heart disease/mitral stenosis), the evening was veiled with unbearable silence. I felt besieged. Troubled, bemused, perplexed, and those that were "pure."

Sure, there were the crickets and those that go "kulak," but that was about it as far as familiar noises were concerned. (I later learned some users encountered snakes along the tracks, with a few saying they actually saw cobras.)

Know thyself

In those 24 hours I learned a great deal about myself, my capacity to think clear under severe physical and mental pressure, my aptitude to look after my tastes despite my own needs and only cater to save the spirit of camaraderie.

The endurance tested was both mine and my bike's. But some felt that test of gone more than Sheila Lahoy. He was to Inquirer's ultimate team with model's Buffy Espino and Cyclopia Jennifer Sibayan (Adventure!) Montblie Garcia. The hammer among us, Lahoy took in three-for tens, two of them just minutes apart. When his saddle post broke in the middle of the road, he carried his saddle in one hand and continued to pedal his way standing up until he finished his lap! He never once gave up on himself.

Indeed, pay tribute that becomes yourself, not the rider next to you. For it is you, and you alone, who decides whether to give it your all despite the obstacles, or concede defeat, give up when you could have done more.

Commit or quit. In the end, I found out that I was, in fact, very much no commitment.

E-mail the author at ajarabelo@inquirer.com.ph

COME HELL OR HIGH WATER. Despite the scorching heat and sleepless nights, Inquirer's Anna Espinosa gives it his all.

Running a marathon is not mission impossible

By Mitch Felipe
Contributor

RUNNING IS NOT JUST FOR A select few. Even an ordinary person can progress from walking to joining marathons.

Running is a goal-oriented activity that uses your physical and mental skills. Whichever training speed and distance you are at right now, there are numerous benefits and results that you can get out of running. You just need to experience each phase with patience and discipline.

If you are overweight, you need to shed excess weight first. You should have a medical clearance from your physician before you can start running. The clearance will depend on your fitness level and other medical conditions.

Start progressive steps with brisk walking, walk/jog intervals, jogging, running. The American Council on Exercise defines jogging as "slower running."

It is not necessary to progress to running if desired goals can be achieved by jogging.

Start and end the jog or run by brisk-walking for 5-8 minutes then perform some stretches. Drink water before, during (every 15 minutes), and after the run. Consume sports drinks if you exercise for more than 90 minutes. Eat some form of carbohydrate within a couple of hours after.

Burning calories

Running effectively burns calories and improves endurance.

William McArdle, Victor and Frank Katch, authors of "Exercise Physiology: Energy, Nutrition, and Human Performance," explained that when running on a flat surface, the energy cost per kilogram of body mass per kilometer traveled averaged one kilocalorie.

Thus, the net energy cost of running one kilometer for individuals weighing 70 kg averages 70 kcal, regardless of running speed. A 60-kg person requires about 600 calories (60 kg x 10 km) to cover a 10-km distance regardless of whether the run takes 45, 60 or 120 minutes.

To burn fat effectively, you need to do it for at least 30 minutes at 50-70 percent of your maximum heart rate (220-age, the formula used to get a person's maximum heart rate—220 is constant and the answer will depend on a person's age). A 40-year-old person should exercise at 90-126 bpm or beats per minute (180-70 percent of maximum heart rate) to burn fat.

The sport also gives you ease the activities a purpose, important for long-term health and weight management. You will become more motivated to doing exercises like strength and flexibility training since you know its purpose in relation to your running performance goals.

Healthy living

Running encourages you to live a healthy lifestyle.

You learn how to run for prolonged times and you forget about unhealthy eating habits like eliminating complex carbohydrates from your diet. Your body will demand more carbohydrates like pasta, rice or bread, which will help you sustain and increase your running speed and duration.

It also reminds you to drink more water and sleep more than six hours to maximize training performance.

Running improves your mood, gives you a sense of accomplishment and promotes self-discipline. You have to set training days to experience significant results.

Possibilities

Running lets you explore more possibilities. You learn from the experience itself and improve your skills by taking running seminars or doing more research on the sport.

As you progress, you can consider joining 5-km, 10-km and 21-km races. There are some upcoming running events (Pinoy 13.000 m Run, Milo National Finals, New Balance Bird starting November).

You can realistically think of joining your first full marathon (42.km) in the near future. Ideally, you should spend at least six months in training. The exercise will vary depending on your fitness level or interest.

Your initial goal should be to finish the race and not to compete.

E-mail the author at mitchfelipe@gmail.com

INSIDE OUT
Gary Quiroz

What pains you?

IT IS A RACE, AND IT BECOMES COMPLICATED with the passage of time.

Human history is the best example of this race. While life was lived simply before, with progress and technology the human condition has become more complex.

The word "urgency" was introduced—the need to do things faster, to get to where we want to go sooner. And so, as humans rush to work, to more deadlines, to much urgent, life has become for everyone literally a human race.

Painfully late

If you wake up in the middle of the night with chest pains, you will be rushed to the hospital. If you find yourself spacing out in the middle of the driveway while driving, it is time to see your therapist. If a persistent pain subsides from your spine compresses your mobility, it is time to visit your chiropractor.

But why wait to feel pain before you seek medical help? Let us try to understand some of the pains of the body and the mind today.

In layman's terms, if you feel pain, your brain is sending signals that there is some part of your body that needs attention. If you ignore it, you are not interested in your health. Getting time only means your health is low in your priority list.

In his book "In Pursuit and In Health," Dr. Philip Mathew describes disease as simply an imbalance in the body, more specifically "a gross imbalance of normal body functions... the end result of dysfunction expressed by signs and symptoms of something in the body that has gone wrong."

Would it be considered suicidal to ignore a body signal like pain? You know the answer to that, by now: the signal, ignore your health.

Build your pyramid

Mathematics said the universal pyramid of food groups was just a guide. You can build your own depending on your lifestyle needs.

He recommends...in this order, water as the base of the pyramid (then you should take more often), vegetables (3-4 servings), cooked/raw, daily), complex carbohydrates, proteins and healthy fats, refined carbs (breads, rolls, sweets, refined flour).

Pain watch

Anti-inflammatory foods should be high on your list such as sardines, mackerel fish, mustard greens, spinach, ampalaya, any green leafy vegetables, apricots (trees, alfalfa, sunfish).

Make it a point to have a salad a day. This is a great start.

Migraine, headaches

Before taking that aspirin, drink two to three glasses of plain water and wait. You may just be dehydrated. See your doctor if pain persists. Try making it a habit to drink relaxing teas—chamomile, St. John's Wort, peppermint.

Backaches. Check your posture. Chances are you have been abusing your spine. Drink plenty of water (your kidneys ought to be hydrated).

Cheat/carbohydrate. Eating overweight can be a problem. Try to lose weight. Have a healthy meal plan. Do moderate exercise. Walk for better health. Try medication that will not cause side effects, like Cefadrin (Sacramento Complex (Healthy Options).

Menstrual pain. Try to relax. Sip a cup of hot ginger tea for its antispasmodic effects. Raise your feet. Try a warm bath with lavender oil. Place a heating pad on your lower back and abdomen. Take an herbal supplement like evening primrose. Increase your B vitamins, zinc, calcium intake through nutritious foods such as seafood, eggs, veggies.

Muscle cramps/strains. Overworked muscles do form a good stretch. Ignore your routine to every other day. Bad posture can cause muscles to stiffen. In the meantime of the way you sit or stand. Increase your magnesium, calcium and potassium intake. You may have minimal depletion.

Natural health

Studies have shown that when you are in pain, worrying about it can cause greater stress and indirectly increase the pain.

"Making a pain killer," Dr. Martin Connors of Inner-tune says, "will only cover up the pain and not its root cause."

Try these instead:

- Relaxation therapy like yoga.
- Mind therapy classes that teach meditation.
- Chiropractic care (at Intersane, tel. 8902379-791, massage, manipulation, ultrasound and acupuncture can alleviate chronic pain).

Heartache

The best cures for a broken heart are:

1. A serving of dark chocolates. Seriously, it boosts your serotonin levels thus producing relaxation. A glass of red wine (shiraz, merlot, marquez...)
2. Exercise like dancing, swimming, running, jogging, body-combat classes, brisk walking. It releases endorphins, your feel-good hormones.
3. Laughter. It has the same relaxing effect. Watch funny movies.
4. Company of loving friends
5. Prayer and praise music

As tenor George Yang, think of McDonald's Philippines year. "Sing a happy tune to drive the blues away."

Affirm with a song from the musical "Annie":

"When I'm on stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, "Tomorrow, tomorrow, I love you tomorrow, you're only a day away."

Love and light!

Setting a record to make a point

Oct. 20 is World Osteoporosis Day and Filipino women are celebrating it by trying to dance their way into the Guinness book

MEDICard. The Healthcare I Deserve!

Take Charge Doc!

What is Newborn screening?

By Linah B. Bobis

ON OCT. 20, AT THE Cultural Center of the Philippines complex, Filipinas will attempt yet again to set a world record to get into the Guinness Book of World Records.

Organized by Ambee, a high-calcium milk specially formulated for adult- particularly women, the event hopes to gather some 10,000 participants in a dance movement.

But the exercise is more than just a mammoth display to bring international attention to the Philippines. Oct. 20 also happens to be World Osteoporosis Day.

The dance exhibition is actually designed to bring attention to the problem also known as brittle bones, a disorder that makes women vulnerable to fractures that can cause permanent disability, even death.

Dr. Leilani Mercado-Asis, vice president of the Osteoporosis Society of the Philippines Foundation Inc. (OSPFI), also pointed out that aside from the physical effects, osteoporosis affected people's mental health.

With their quality of life adversely affected, many people with the disorder become depressed.

Osteoporosis, characterized by loss of normal bone density usually manifests itself after women reach the menopausal stage. But the problem could have its underpinnings years before that.

Silent disease

Although the disorder is serious, it can remain undetected for years until a fracture has occurred, hence, it has been called a silent disease.

Up to a certain age in adulthood, bone density develops. Bone specialists say bone density development for Filipino women stops more or less at age 35.

Genetics has a role to: making women more vulnerable to osteoporosis but even people who are genetically predisposed to the disorder can make themselves less vulnerable through proper nutrition and by avoiding certain risk factors.

As with many other diseases, osteoporosis is affected by a person's lifestyle. To prevent the disease or to keep it from worsening, smoking has to stop and alcohol use moderated. Diet has to improve, with more calcium and vitamin D added. Exercise also has to be added to the equation.

Calcium reserves

Drinking milk is an easy, convenient way to stock up on calcium. By drinking milk, women can ensure they have sufficient calcium reserves for the menopausal stage when hormonal changes decrease in this their bones.

Dr. Asis said: "By drinking milk and acquiring healthy habits, you can strengthen your bones over time and rely on that strength when the time comes (around mid-40s to early 50s, onset of menopause).

"It works like a bank account. The more you save, the more you have, and the more you can depend on... If you have strong bones and have a level calcium savings in your bones, even if your estrogens goes down, the bone thinning during the menopausal stage won't hit the fracture risk level."

The new Ambee, already the biggest milk brand in the Philippines and Asia, gives people, particularly women, more reason to drink up.

It has recently added Phyto 8 Isoflavone Formula to its milk. An extra kick to preserve bone strength through a three-step process:

1. It provides essential bone nutrients to build dense and strong bones.

2. It ensures rapid absorption through enzyme fortification.

3. A kick in nutrients with the revolutionary Phyto 8 that works deeply to activate proteins in the bones that lock in calcium.

To promote the Oct. 20 dance movement and milk-drinking in general in an effort to way to prevent osteoporosis, Ambee has partnered a formidable group of endorsers—actress Dina Bonnevie, Asia's Queen of Songs Pilita Corrales, award-winning fitness officionado Jodee Lee Blanco, dancer diva Becky Garcia, former Miss Universe Margie Moran, swimming champion and television personality Akiko Thomson, and pastor/ballet dancer Ronnie Gomez.

THEY Ambee women endorsers (from left) Jodee Blanco, Becky Garcia, Margie Moran, Dina Bonnevie, Akiko Thomson and Ronnie Gomez

ANGLING marketing manager Ning Reyes, Inez Crespo-Hoffmann-Pallasch and Fonterra general manager Carlo Montico

Love the new Banoffee Pie

A delightful twist of fresh banana chunks and premium sorbash on a bed of chocolate toffee. Topped with whipping cream and chocolate curls. All nestled on a delicious graham crust.

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It lightens the celebration.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Ernesto C. Velarde

Kim Chiu's one wish

By Marinel R. Cruz

"ONLY BIG BROTHER TEEN EDITION" winners Kim Chiu and Levi rose wish to re-unite her fan-loving movie, Star Cinema's "I've Fallen For You," with Sen. brother, whom she has not seen since she was 9.

"If and when we finally get to talk, I will ask her why she left and what took her so long to come back," Kim said over lunch with the entertainment press last week.

Kim, 17, said she has stopped looking for her mama. "It's up to her now — she knows where to find me."

In "I've Fallen For You," Kim starring with Filipino heartthrob Gerald Anderson, a matured realtor.

What's keeping you from getting together?

Q: Our reality for a more relationship, but Kim isn't. I respect that.

Do you think people will like "I've Fallen For You" better than your first movie, "Hotel Day Night"?

Q: We're not sure. Gerald and I play the kids here. We're very thankful to our Gerald fans group. There found love promised to fly to Cebu—where film is based—to watch the premiere night there.

Who will shoulder their airfare?

Q: They will. They've always been like that. They go to our mall shows and hand out "I've Fallen For You" flyers that they paid for with their own money. They bought a slot for Gerald and me on Pinoy Exchange and created a swing billboard for a month for us.

Q: When we taped some scenes in Cebu, they threw away and they always bring us food.

Also, you said people close to you will watch the Cebu premiere. Does this include your mo?

Q: Didn't send her an invitation though.

At one point, you were movie into your talent. Who were your favorite actors?

Q: The first Pinoy film I watched when I visited in the would were "El Another" and three starring John Lloyd Cruz and Bea Alonzo. The first time I watched with them, I was the stuck.

K: I like John Lloyd Cruz movies, too. I also like Heart Evangelista.

Q: We were also dared by the movie stars in this film, like Tito Oliver Mutilated and Dan Dan Gutierrez). They helped us a lot, giving us tips and boosting our confidence.

K: I made sure I memorized all my lines when I had scenes with Sir Lolit (Dr. Louie), multiple-take directions.

Can you share some experiences while filming?

Q: We traveled a lot. Unlike in "Hot Day Night" (which was shot mostly in a villa) campus, we filmed this one in different beautiful places.

How was Lito Cayetano as director?

Q: He's like our barkada. He can make us dance, smile, but at work, he's focused and dedicated.

K: At first, I was nervous to be around him. Still (to a manager). I eventually warmed up to him.

TAKE FIVE

Kim Chiu and Gerald Anderson play lead roles in the movie "I've Fallen For You."

'Tribu' boys take cool trip

BAGUIO CITY—THE TOMBO gangsters who won Best Actor honors at the 2007 Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival were never spectators to Baguio artists bringed their drums and bass their gangsterism last week.

"Ang kompetisi dito sa Baguio, was all about Lubuntin would say.

Their first entered up to the among turbulent gang drama, dancing with the rebels. A few moments later, they were freestyle-rapping.

"U ang Andy dito sa Baguio,

THE BEER BELLY REDUCER

Fast And Easy Inch-Loss For Men

For men who want to lose that bulging and unsightly belly quickly and easily, now there is a solution! Plastic surgeons have invented a machine that can "melt away" stubborn tummy fat in a patient's lunchbreak – **ULTRASHAPE**. This treatment gets rid of unwanted bulges and, unlike liposuction, does not require surgery. It's very effective in removing excess stomach fat, love handles or fat in other areas.

FAST, EFFECTIVE and SAFE. It's the most advanced non-invasive method of fat reduction to date. It works by focusing high frequency ultrasound waves from outside the body to targeted areas. These ultrasound waves break down fat cells without damaging blood vessels or other tissues. The fat cells are then eliminated through natural processes over a period of about 3 weeks, in the same way the body dissipates the discoloration from a bruise.

Ultrashape was founded 5 years ago in USA by Ami Glickman M.D., formerly a senior plastic surgeon and Yoram Eshet, PhD, MBA, a leading expert in high-power ultrasound technology. When they developed Ultrashape, it was well known that ultrasound waves were able to break down and destroy fat cells, releasing the fat contained within them. Glickman and Eshet built on that to come up with this unique concept of Ultrashape.

Ultrashape is the first and only non-surgical fat-destroying treatment. It promises a reduction of up to 2 cm. in a single session. It is such a hassle-free procedure. You walk in, get the treatment and go straight to your next appointment. It's as easy as that. Absolutely no anesthesia, no pain and no recovery is needed. Patients can resume their normal activities right after a treatment. It does not have the risks of liposuction and can be used to effectively deal with problem areas of fat.

Ultrashape promises an average loss of about 2 cm. in a single treatment.

Normally about 4 or 5 sessions are recommended to fully achieve the result required. Both men and women who have tried it were impressed by the immediate results after just a single session. Proven effective, Ultrashape is definitely a breakthrough in fat reduction.

Ultrashape is now available at **Marie France FOR MEN.** Call 813-7909 for your free consultation. All consultations and treatments are strictly confidential & private.

EXCLUSIVE

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CHRISTIAN BALE · FREDDIE RODRIGUEZ · EVA LONGORIA

"An amazing performance, one of the best of the year..."

"A powerful film..."

"Bale & Rodriguez are mesmerizing..."

'Tribu' boys...

Point page B1

navigating on six lOft, 11-tall feet in Baguio, I'm driving[illegible]," Lalmeda continued.

Shirbert Manuel was wearing his trademark accessories and black hoodie.

The "Tribu" members are going all over the country, starting with other gang members. Manuel's advice to them: "Stay in school."

Lalmeda himself was in school, but had taken a break to promote the movie.

During a forum at the CSB-John Hay Trade and Cultural Center after a screening, he said the "Tribu" boys should inform like role models, following the movie's popularity. "Nagiging idols na kami ng mga bata." Frank Cimatu, Inquirer Northern Luzon

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ARANETA COLISEUM

UAAP BASKETBALL FINALS — October 4, Thursday

BILLY CRAWFORD - IT'S TIME — October 6, Saturday 8pm

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 No Reservations	2 Resident Evil: Extinction	3 Rogue Assassin	4 I've Fallen For You		
GLORIETTA 4	1 I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry	2 Resident Evil: Extinction	3 Resident Evil: Extinction			
	4 Joshua	5 Underdogs	6 No Reservations	7 I've Fallen For You		
GREENBELT 1	1 I've Fallen For You	2 Resident Evil: Extinction				
GREENBELT 3	1 No Reservations	2 Resident Evil: Extinction				
	3 Joshua	4 Underdogs / Ghost 'Em Up	5 I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry			
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 Resident Evil: Extinction	2 No Reservations				
	3 I've Fallen For You	4 Rogue Assassin	5 I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry			
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 Resident Evil: Extinction	2 I've Fallen For You	3 I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry	4 The Brave One		
MARKET! MARKET!	1 Resident Evil: Extinction	2 No Reservations				
	3 Rogue Assassin	4 I've Fallen For You	5 I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry			
TRINOMA	1 I've Fallen For You	2 Rogue Assassin	3 I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry	4 No Reservations		
	5 Ghost 'Em Up	6 Underdogs / The Brave One	7 Resident Evil: Extinction			

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — SM Appliance Madness · September 28 to October 16 at Glorietta Activity Center

Greenbelt — Jazz Nights · September 28, 2007 at the Greenbelt 3 Al Fresco

Alabang Town Center — Power Volleyball Championships · September 22 & 23, 2007 at the Activity Center

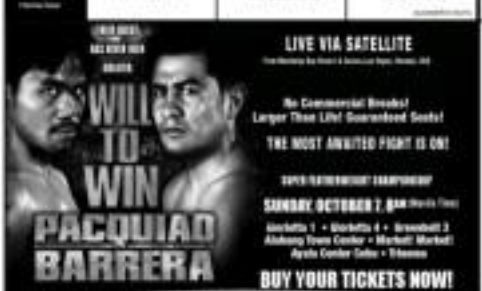
Ayala Center Cebu — Elton Tuason of American Idol Live! · September 28, 4 pm, OnStage (Cinema 1)

Market! Market! — Toyota Showcase · September 28 to 30, 2007, at the Activity Center

Christagifts — Repertory Philippines presents LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST · September 14 – October 7, 2007

Ayala Museum — Diwata ng Kayumanggi: An Exhibition by Mideo Cruz and Ronald Ventura · September 13 to 23, 2007, Ayala Museum

Tri Nomma — Mother Care Exhibit · September 28 to 30, 10 am to 9 pm · Promenade Area, Level 3



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THE CLICK FIVE

Greenbelt 3 Park · October 13, 2007 · 7PM

Alabang Town Center Activity Center · October 14, 2007 · 6PM

DID YOU KNOW...

'Jack Bauer' charged with drunk driving

WASHINGTON—KIEFER SUTHERLAND, who portrays the ultimate counter-fighting agent Jack Bauer in the hit television series "24," faces possible prison time for two recently charged Friday with drunk driving.

Sutherland, 40, was a year and a half in jail for two charges for driving while intoxicated, according to the office of the Los Angeles city attorney. AFP

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GALLERIA

1 RESIDENT EVIL 3 – THE	6 THE BRAVE ONE
2 RESIDENT EVIL 3	7 I KNOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK & LARRY
3 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU	8 InBloom: GULONG
4 STARDUST Sneak Preview	9 NO RESERVATION
5 ANG LALAKE sa PAROLA	10 ROGUE ASSASSIN

A FILM BY DOCKIE FERNANDEZ

GULONG is about friendship, love and life. The story is told from the point of view of Apeo, a small, underworld boy whose quest for an elusive treasure reveals the stuff he is made of. With him on this adventure are his sweet fantasy and his best friend Tom Tom. The story begins with a premise: Here are two children going to space their summer vacation! Tom Tom suggests that they go to his uncle's restaurant, but Apeo tells him that his uncle's restaurant is not that far. Tom Tom refuses to believe him, and Apeo and Manny have a problem on their hands. Apeo, a kind Tom, and his uncle and to run for his life. Manny finds an old bicycle and the search on and problem solved. The Reggie and only one is in town for the first a hundred years. He agrees and promises to come back with the money the next day. The story is filled with events which affects Apeo, his friends, his family and even the community. In the end, a discarded 50 year old bicycle connects the past and present and becomes a catalyst for healing old wounds and knowing a love affair that has long been left for dead.

MTRCB Rating: G

watch this only at Robinsons Movieworld Galleria
September 12 to October 03

ERMITA

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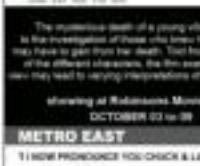
2 STARDUST Sneak Preview	6 NO RESERVATION
3 RESIDENT EVIL 3	5 I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK & LARRY
4 RESIDENT EVIL 3	7 ROGUE ASSASSIN



METRO EAST

1 I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK & LARRY	5 ROGUE ASSASSIN
2 RESIDENT EVIL 3	6 THE BRAVE ONE
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NOVALICHES

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STA. ROSA

1 THE LAST LEGION
2 NANCY DREW
3 I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK & LARRY
4 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU

LIPA

1 I KNOW WHO KILLED ME
2 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU
3 DAYWATCH
4 DISTURBIA

DASMARIÑAS

1 DISTURBIA
2 THE BRAVE ONE
3 RESIDENT EVIL 3
4 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU

IMUS

1 RESIDENT EVIL 3
2 STARDUST Sneak Preview
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4 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU

ANGELES

1 THE BRAVE ONE
2 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU
3 SKINWALKERS
4 I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK & LARRY

TARLAC

1 THE INVASION
2 A LOVE STORY
3 I-MOB

STARMILLS

1 I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK & LARRY	4 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU
2 ROGUE ASSASSIN	5 RUSH HOUR 3
3 SKINWALKERS	6 THE BRAVE ONE

BACOLOD

1 ROGUE ASSASSIN	
2 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU	
3 NANCY DREW	
4 DISTURBIA	
5 WAITRESS	
6 LEGAN LAHM	

ILOILO

1 ROGUE ASSASSIN	
2 I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU	
3 THE BRAVE ONE	
4 UNDERDOG	
5 SKINWALKERS	
6 STOMP THE YARD	

'Zaido' director no 'Shaider' fan

By Boyet Sun Dingo Jr

TV DIRECTOR DOMINIC ZAPATA admits he didn't watch the Japanese live-action series "Shaider" as a kid.

"I wasn't a fan," he says. "I was more into Chipmunks-animated cartoons do me. O "Voltes V and Mazinger Z."

Now he's directing GMA-7's "Zaido," Pinoy version of "Shaider," first aired in the country in the late 1980s.

He recounts, "I asked myself, 'Am I the right guy for this?' Then I realized that, on the positive side, I'll have a fresh take on it."

Zapata, who previously directed iconic classics "Darna" and "Captain Barbell" for the Kapuso network, doesn't mind revamping old material for new-age audiences.

"All the stories in the world have been written. It's just a matter of repackaging old stories to cater to new times."

He puts it in culinary terms: "Ika-an nadiyan kasi, kung ano-anong niluluto. Kaya, nasa cooking lab din, nasa way ko 'yan. We just have to come up with

Even so, Dominic Zapata says P10B Kapuso network is fully behind the series

DEBUT Dominic says his version here's closely to the original's campy spirit

new aspects spruced it."

He promises to stay true to the "campy" spirit of "Shaider."

For example, he fight scenes here closely to the original. "Sa mukha nga of bigasuan...ang costumizes—sa the action scenes. People in robot or monster costumes, like the chars. That's the same technique used in Japan."

Zapata explains: "Technically, we're making a lot of the prosthetics, like the digestive suits for the characters. We now make characters fly and do other things that a person in robot costume can't do."

He is also looking at incorporating the Brazil-inflavor sport "Jiujitsu Defense in to the story. "If aim cool in the sporting organizer of The third Junior Brazil movie. Unlike Stylish Scammon jump over obstacles without the use of wires and rope. We can try to do those stunts," he says. Or maybe we can learn how the local group that practices Jiujitsu Defense!

The challenge

Zapata asserts that the "T.G.I.-Office" GMA network is fully behind him. "In fact, they've approved all our requests."

The challenge, he clarifies, isn't about "trying to beat the competition, it's trying to outdo yourself."

"Zaido" premiered last week, on the same night as the AID-CBN fantasy-serie "Lastikman."

"The audience is always looking for something new and different. We're definitely ... punching above our weight class with 'Zaido,'" concludes Zapata.